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# CORDELIA CHANTRELL

*A Romance*

BY

MEADE MINNIGERODE, 1887-1967

Anderson College and Theological Seminary

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK LONDON
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# PART I

# THE DARK CHANTRELLS

## 1838–1858

"Chanterelle roux, ne crains du tout;
Noir Chanterelle, malheur appelle."
*Old French Rhyme, date unknown.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE BARONY OF PENMARCH

### 1

IN the brief, and already inaccurate, obituary notices concerning the once celebrated Cordelia Chantrell, which appeared in the New York newspapers at the time of her decease in 1878, it was not mentioned that she was discovered stone dead on the floor, with a box of matches in her hand, before a hidden closet in the wall of her unpretentious parlor in a boarding house on West Twenty-third Street. In the closet, thus accidentally revealed, were found a great many letters, and the notebooks which constitute what is now known as the Chantrell Diary—a misleading title, since there are really two diaries, Cordelia's and that of her scarcely less

famous grandmother, Suzanne de Colignac Chantrell. That Cordelia Chantrell had intended to burn them, when death overtook her, cannot be doubted.

Since then, from time to time, other diaries, other journals, many more worn and faded letters have come to light—a long, patience provoking process culminating in the recent discovery, at Nassau, in the Bahamas, of Godfrey Loring's long sought for papers—so that now the truth may be known, the truth concerning Preston Baimbridge, and above all the truth concerning Cordelia Chantrell, that strange woman.

## 2

She was born on June 19, 1838, at Charleston, the granddaughter of Raoul and Suzanne de Colignac Chantrell. One records this fact rather than that she was the daughter of Stephen and Polly Eggleston Chantrell; for they perished together, the father and mother, in a packet bound for Martinique, during the hurricane of 1840. And so the children came to live in the grandfather's house; to be known

henceforth as Suzanne de Colignac Chantrell's grandchildren. Three children—Giles, born in 1837, "in the middle of the night, of course, like all the Chantrells," and the twins, Stephen Raoul and Cordelia, or the other way around, for she preceded him.

And while they were not born in the middle of the night, but at noon of that June day in 1838, the advent of the twins caused an even greater rustling of letter paper, a more garrulous scratching of pens. For Giles Chantrell, born in the night, was a fair haired Chantrell, a blue eyed, pink and blond Chantrell, but the twins, born at noon, were dark Chantrells. Black eyed, black haired, pale skinned "dark Chantrells," and all Charleston knew the translated rhyme—

> "Nothing beware from Chantrells fair,
> But Chantrells dark bring misery stark."

It was an old rhyme come from France, through the West Indies, with the first Charleston Chantrell—Etienne Raoul de Chanterelle, as they spelled it then; an old

family legend traced back to days when a certain dark haired Chanterelle had, according to the chronicle, behaved "in a scandalous manner towards the ladies of his acquaintance." And now, in 1838, there were two dark Chantrells, not one but two, and one of them a girl. Such a thing had not happened for generations.

3

The Chantrells were extremely important people in Charleston. If no other indication of this fact were available, it would still be evident from the constant references to the family in contemporary correspondence. Come from the French province of Santo Domingo, they had soon identified themselves with the shipping activities of the port and achieved a conspicuous leadership in its mercantile affairs.

In the 1820's Chantrell and Chantrell flew their houseflag on every ocean, their warehouses on the Cooper were crammed with spice scented freight, swarming with sweating, singing negroes. In the 1830's the packets came,

and they started the Line to Bordeaux. It was then that the firm name was changed to Chantrell and Baimbridge, Raoul Chantrell and Charles Baimbridge—a Northerner, the latter, come from Massachusetts in 1837 to the Chantrell counting room, with his wife, Prudence Ames, and their year old Preston, a child who "resembled a new grown carrot," with his pink and white cheeks and red poll. Charleston was not pleased. A stranger from Boston, whose wife was reported to have queer notions about slaves. But Raoul Chantrell did not care whether Charleston was pleased or not.

"By cock and pye!" he is said to have exclaimed once. "My counting room and the St. Cecilia Society are two different things. Charles Baimbridge is an able man who knows his business. I brought him here to manage ships—what do I care where he comes from?"

And Charles Baimbridge knew his business extremely well, not merely the business of ships, but the business of conducting himself with discretion and propriety as a stranger within the straight gates of Charleston. He purchased the old Albermarle plantation, he

gave excellent dinners, he became enormously popular—and his wife had no notions whatever about slaves except that she was mortally terrified of them. When the firm name was finally changed to include his own, they gave him a banquet at the Planters' at which sixteen toasts were drunk in the glow of one hundred and forty-two candles by every gentleman of standing in Charleston, excepting Royal Penmarch.

Socially—and in view of the fact that the Chantrells were a mercantile family, and not planters in the strict sense of the word, the spirit of the time requires some reassurance on this point—socially it is enough to remember that Raoul Chantrell was twice President of the Jockey Club; he kept magnificent horses at his Waccaboo plantation; and that he was a member of the Board of Managers of the St. Cecilia Society. Waccaboo, after Penmarch, was the most beautiful plantation, and one of the most visited in the Parishes; the city house was the pride of Charleston—panelled in cypress, columned, fluted, endowed with dignity and grace, unbelievably lovely.

4

And Raoul Chantrell was the husband of Suzanne de Colignac.

She came to Charleston from Martinique at the age of twelve, a frail, dark child, deceptively demure and silent, an insignificant little person until one looked at her the second time, and one usually did for she was already then amazingly beautiful.

"That little chit of a girl from the Islands," so Royal Penmarch once saw fit to describe her. "She will probably die soon of the country fever."

She lived to be seventy-eight, in 1877. A very great lady in all her days. And in 1815, when she was sixteen, she married Raoul Chantrell. The fact is well known, spread upon the registers of the Huguenot Church, and throughout the pages of countless contemporary letters. What is not so well known—if, indeed, it was ever known until recently to more than three people—is that she first refused to marry Royal Penmarch. He came on a certain morning, all rigged out in silver buckles, and satin breeches, and a bottle green

coat with gold buttons, into her mother's drawing room and offered her his hand and, presumably, his heart. And she refused him.

"Refuse!" Royal Penmarch exclaimed. "Miss de Colignac, I am offering you the Barony of Penmarch!"

Just as though it had been the throne of France. And she laughed at him, which was a great mistake, as well as a discourtesy.

"It is a tempting offer, Mr. Penmarch," she told him—she wrote it all down afterwards in her journal. "The Barony of Penmarch would compensate for many things." Impudent little minx! "But I have decided to accept Mr. Chantrell."

"God bless my soul!" Royal Penmarch stammered. "I had no idea—when did you decide to accept Mr. Chantrell?"

"Just now, Mr. Penmarch," she informed him sweetly.

Royal Penmarch went stamping out of the house, and her mother called her a little nincompoop—*une petite sotte*—and that evening her engagement to Raoul Chantrell was announced. It was then that Royal Penmarch

referred to her as "that little chit of a girl from the Islands." There could easily have been a duel as a result of it, but Raoul Chantrell was not present at the time, and Royal Penmarch was in his cups. But Suzanne paid him back at the wedding reception.

"I hear the grapes do not promise well at Penmarch this year," she remarked to him.

"Who told you that?" he enquired.

"I forget," she smiled. "I expect it was some little chit of a girl from the Islands."

She did not like him, and thought him "a wamble-cropped peacock." He was quite a few years her senior of course. He, for his part, hated her. He had, supposedly, at one time admired her. But from that morning in her mother's drawing room, down to the very last hour of his life, he hated her. And it was not good for one, for one's children or for one's grandchildren, to be hated by Royal Penmarch.

It was not to be good for Cordelia Chantrell.

5

It seems to have been one of Royal Penmarch's favorite affectations, his habit of re-

ferring to Penmarch as the Barony. It had been a Barony in its time, of course, and an early Penmarch had been Landgrave—and his wife Lady Penmarch—in the days of the Lords Proprietary of the Palatinate of Carolina, but the term had long since failed to have any meaning. Still Royal Penmarch persisted in speaking of the Barony of Penmarch, just as he was always referring to his "illustrious forbear, the first Royal Penmarch, who commanded his own vessel in these waters," when all the Low Country was aware that the gentleman in question had been nothing but an illustrious "brother of the coast," a gentleman pirate during that period when Charleston was known as the Rogues' Harbor. One of the many "hants" of Penmarch.

But these little affectations of Royal Penmarch's were characteristic of a man who at his death, in 1862, was still the perfect embodiment of a Federalist of the previous century. He had that, at least, in common with the Chantrells. In other respects, he had little in common with the Chantrells. Waccaboo was not a Barony, they did not worship—or what-

ever it was that Royal Penmarch did in church —at St. James, Goosecreek, or at St. Michael's, they were in "business," they trafficked in commerce, dirtying their fingers at the trade of factors. If Royal Penmarch had had his way, the Chantrells would not have figured on the roster of the St. Cecilia Society. They were not planters, they did not grow the rice as he did, as all real gentlemen did, leaving it to be sold by factors who were not really gentlemen in his estimation.

"A gentleman does not write things in ledgers." He said that once.

Indeed, it was a question in Royal Penmarch's mind whether the Chantrells could really be considered gentlemen, just as he was quite certain that Charles Baimbridge was not one. As for the Chantrells—well, they were in the St. Cecilia, and one forgot the counting room. There were three things which Royal Penmarch held sacred above all others—after Royal Penmarch—the Barony of Penmarch, his rice and the St. Cecilia Society. Perhaps four, if one included *The Southern Literary Messenger*. He was an arrogant, magnifi-

cently unintelligent youth with the manners of an overseer, who grew into a hard, domineering, heavily jowled, ramrod of a man.

He took a wife, as the saying goes—it was probably just that in his case—in 1819, four years after the de Colignac episode. She was Sarah Mills of Savannah, the reigning belle of Georgia, and it was the opinion of Charleston that Royal Penmarch had done well for himself, even if he had had to go to Savannah for her. He was evidently of the same opinion.

"The grapes promise well at Penmarch this year," he informed Suzanne Chantrell. It was the nearest approach to nimbleness of spirit ever achieved by him in the entire course of his heavy footed existence.

He brought her back to the Barony, to the stately brick and cypress mansion through which Tarleton's troopers had once stormed in pursuit of the Swamp Fox, Marion; to the Penmarch linen, and the Penmarch silver, and the Penmarch mahogany; he ushered her into the Penmarch pew at St. James, Goosecreek, where she sat under the funeral hatchments and gazed at the royal arms of Great Britain which

still adorned the altar; with a wave of his hand he presented to her the Penmarch estates, the stables, the dairies, the barns, the mill, the forge; and then he left her to her own devices in that great house so plentifully supplied—from Turlington's Original Balsam to canary vidonia—with everything except contentment.

She stood it for four years, and then she died; of the country fever, so they said, but there were those who insisted that she had simply grown weary of looking at the royal escutcheon above the altar at St. James—if not infinitely more weary of looking at Royal Penmarch himself, and of hearing him say "Gad's my life, Madam!" She remains a notoriously beautiful, rather vague figure, who lived for a while at Penmarch and then died. She was never known, in her whole life, to say anything of the slightest importance.

They had one son, Sidney. A cantankerous child, who, as a man, might have played a less negligible rôle in the present chronicle if he had not been merely the unimpressive counterpart, the timid repetition, the frequently blustering echo of his father who spent most of his

time shouting at him to "shut your clamtrap!" As it is, almost all that need be known about Sidney Penmarch is that he married Clarissa Templeton, in 1839, and became the father of little Sally Penmarch.

And with Sally Penmarch one comes again to Preston Baimbridge, to Giles and Stephen Raoul Chantrell, and to Cordelia Chantrell—boys and girls, belles and beaux of the same generation.

## 6

And in order to understand Cordelia, it is necessary to understand them all, to see them against their domestic backgrounds, in their inherited settings, and in particular Sally Penmarch since she was to be Cordelia's dearest friend.

Her grandfather disliked her; she should have been a boy as it developed that "that ninny Clarissa" was not to have any more children; she reminded him of his wife—to whom, as a child already, she bore a startling resemblance—and she had been born on the day his precious Pride of India tree had died in the

Charleston garden, an event for which, in his unintelligent manner, he seemed to hold her responsible. A mysterious child, restless as a marsh light, intolerant of observation and restraint, always engaged in absorbing tasks, flitting about on inconceivable errands. A silent, remote child, deeply contemplative and inquisitive, serious and unhurried, and yet given to disconcerting laughter and startling spontaneities of speech.

"I can spit further'n my cousin Seraphina," she once triumphantly announced to a scandalized contingent of visiting Mills adults.

Precisely the personality—reticent, contemptuous, unabashed—to exasperate Royal Penmarch, as his son's magniloquence, his daughter-in-law's insipidity and "the grouty disposition of my late wife's relatives" had never exasperated him. An exasperation mixed with involuntary admiration. The child, in his estimation, had "a smart chance of spirit." An exasperation mixed, also, with fear.

She saw things. Penmarch was a spooky place—"pokerish" as they called it—endowed



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with supernatural legends, fostered, no doubt, by the negroes. It is not necessary, here, to discuss the reliability of these legends, the actuality of the Penmarch "hants"; it is sufficient to note that the plantation had a haunted name, and that Sally Penmarch was generally believed to have seen its ghosts. What she did, probably, was to listen to the negroes' tales and then encourage her active imagination to visualize them. At all events, she terrified her grandfather with her frequent assumption, shall one say, of clairvoyance. The fact would be of slight importance—a queer child's trick of provoking her elders—if it had not been for its effect upon her mother.

Clarissa Penmarch was not a happy woman. She was not happy at Penmarch, she was not happy with her husband, she was not happy with her daughter. She feared and detested Royal Penmarch, who treated her like a piece of furniture—a useless piece of furniture, moreover, because of her alleged inability to provide an heir for Penmarch. If he had had his way, they would have sent the doctors packing and risked it, but public opinion must

be considered. She knew that, and she hated him for it, and it was a part of her perpetual humiliation in that house that she had never been able to summon up courage enough to tell him so. She had never been able to summon up courage enough to do anything except bite her nails in the presence of his venomously courteous brutalities. And then one day she discovered that Royal Penmarch was afraid of Sally; that the child was able—where she got it the Lord only knew, on the Mills side, perhaps—was able to disturb her grandfather, to annoy him, to jounce him out of his arrogant, despotic complacency. It was to be a fatal discovery.

It happened in the breakfast room at Penmarch, when Sally was nine. She came lopping down the stairs and announced that she had seen her grandmother the evening before on the landing, her grandmother Mills, dead these twenty-six years. Royal Penmarch nearly swallowed his spoon. It was impossible, ridiculous, they told her; she had been dreaming, she had been listening to the negroes, she didn't know B from a bull's foot,

she was telling fibs. The child insisted, she talked back to her grandfather, she contradicted him, she laughed at him. Royal Penmarch had a conniption.

"Clarissa!" he roared finally. "Take your child away!"

In the doorway, Sally turned and looked at him.

"My!" she remarked. "Aren't you savagerous!"

But the child was not punished.

## 7

From that day forth, Clarissa's life was animated by a single secret purpose. In a sudden, exulting moment, she had discovered that Royal Penmarch was afraid of his granddaughter; that the child did not give a hooter for his thunderings; that she could be prompted into ways of petty annoyance towards him, encouraged to gainsay his authority, transformed, some day perhaps, into an instrument of vengeance. Sally must stick up for herself —she had as good a right to her opinions—he

was only a sniptious old man—she had not been "born in the woods to be scared by an owl." Always, during the years that followed, behind the closed doors of Penmarch, Clarissa whispered these things to her daughter, rehearsed these utterances—echoes of her own broken determinations—planted this vicious seed of discord and rebellion.

It is an unlovely picture, this deliberate sacrificing by a mother of her daughter's esteem for the sake of a private feud. For that, inevitably, is what happened. Sally saw straight through her mother, just as she saw through her grandfather, and, if current reports are to be believed, through the walls of Penmarch. Clairvoyant or not, she read her mother's inmost soul, she saw the niggardly motives behind her constant insinuations, and she lost all respect for her. Clarissa understood that. Of all the humiliations that she had borne at Penmarch, this was perhaps the greatest, that not even in the eyes of her only daughter had she been able to preserve a semblance of self-respect; and that, realizing this, she still persisted in the unworthy traffic which was

estranging them. But the thought of Royal Penmarch, of the years spent under his roof, of the unhappiness heaped upon her by "that slab-sided, jimberjawed old man," was too much. It obscured every other consideration, every other duty; it engulfed her pride, her decency, her common sense.

"I am a wicked woman," she once wrote. "No, perhaps not wicked, for it takes courage to be wicked, and I am a coward. But what I am doing is wrong. It is wrong for me to set the child against her grandfather, and doubly wrong of me to use her for the ends which I have not the courage to achieve alone. She despises me for it, I can see it in her eyes when I talk with her. Was ever anything more shameful? But I cannot help it. A hundred times I have determined to put an end to my persuadings, but always I return to them. It is the only way by which I can ever hope to get even with Royal Penmarch for all that he has said and done to me. I don't know how, but I have the certainty that some day if I can push Sally far enough she will do something to break his heart. I should say his spirit, for

he has no heart. This is the only thing I live for, nothing else matters."

And in 1858 she wrote—

"Something has happened. I see a way of spiting Royal Penmarch if only Sally can be managed. He wants her to marry Preston Baimbridge, he has set his heart on it, as otherwise he thinks she will marry Stephen Raoul Chantrell, and he hates Suzanne Chantrell so, why I don't know, that he can't bear to think of Penmarch going some day to a grandson of hers. So he has decided to make Sally marry Preston Baimbridge. I don't know what she thinks, she never tells me anything, but I know she is fond of young Chantrell, and she is devoted to his twin sister Cordelia. If she should refuse to marry Preston! If she should marry Stephen Raoul, elope with him, anything, I don't care! I shall do all in my power, all in my power . . ."

The page of the journal is torn at that point, quite evidently scratched where Clarissa's pen went ripping into the paper, as though it had been a knife in Royal Penmarch's side.

## CHAPTER II

### SHIPS AND BIRDS

### 1

THE years had passed. In June, 1858, Royal Penmarch and Raoul Chantrell were in their sixties, Charles Baimbridge of Albermarle was fifty-four, Suzanne Chantrell fifty-nine. The grandchildren were coming of age. At Waccaboo, Giles Chantrell was twenty-one, the twins twenty. Sally Penmarch was eighteen, Preston Baimbridge was not quite twenty-two.

Childhood had gone by. One has seen in what fashion at Penmarch; quietly and studiously at Albermarle; noisily, and sunnily, and very happily at Waccaboo, where the three Chantrell grandchildren kept the place in a perpetual hurra's nest of dogs, horses, cousins

and neighboring playmates, among them, frequently, Preston Baimbridge and Sally Penmarch—for Royal Penmarch could not prevent his granddaughter's affiliations, as he would have said, with the Chantrell children.

Sally came and went on her little mare, she was gone all afternoon cantering down the wood roads under the pines, she gave no account of herself to anyone. And the older she grew, the more frequently she went to Waccaboo, where there were always syllabubs, and flummeries, and other palatable doings—trust Madame Chantrell—and boys to cavort with, and Cordelia singing and laughing all the day long. So, as a child, Cordelia seems to have been—"a gay, lighthearted damsel, sweet and gentle for all her high spirits, the idol of her brothers, the constant delight of her grandparents." And if one turns away with reluctance from this glimpse of her otherwise unremarkable childhood, it is because the Chantrell curse was so soon to come upon her, and all laughter and singing cease, and it is pleasant to know that once, for a while, she was extremely happy.

But now childhood had gone by. Giles Chantrell and Preston Baimbridge were graduated from the South Carolina College, and were "writing things in ledgers" in the Chantrell and Baimbridge counting room. Sally had put up her hair, "in Grecian bands with gold beads," and was breaking hearts, already, at Flat Rock and at the Virginia Hot Springs, and at the northern spas. She was very beautiful, of course. At seventeen, she bore an extraordinary resemblance to her grandmother. There were hints of Penmarch in the way she carried herself, in her slow gestures, in the immobility of her countenance; the tilt of her chin, the curve of her shoulders, were unmistakably Templeton. But the slender waisted figure, the almost colorless face with the brilliant dark eyes under their arching brows, were all utterly Mills. She was, from all accounts, almost as beautiful, and in the same style, as Cordelia.

And Cordelia was a beauty, a "real, spang beauty, none of your simpering droopers smeared with Micheaux's freckle wash"—some of their correspondence is really delightful—

the acknowledged belle, not only of Charleston, but of all South Carolina. She had Suzanne's tiny feet and hands, the ivory pallor that went so well with her black, satin textured hair; from her mother she had inherited the deep brown eyes, like autumn pools, the high forehead set off by her beau-catchers, the "spit curls" pasted down on her temples with mucilage of quince seed; the grace and carriage of a long line of tall Chantrells were in her figure. She was a pale, dark Juno with a celestial smile —most of these descriptions are quoted—the broad, big mouthed, honest Chantrell smile. She created a sensation at her first St. Cecilia Ball—

". . . with her hair coiled up in thick rouleaux like cables, dressed with roses and marabout feathers tipped with gold dust. Her ball dress was of white *gros de Naples,* the corsage very low in the neck, tight to the bust, and finished to a point with lace and a stomacher of the same. The skirt was ornamented with rows of pearls and small tassels."

Very likely. They simply went mad over her, all the white gloved young dandies of

Charleston. It was a triumph. It was a triumph everywhere—at the Jockey Ball when she came in from Waccaboo for Race Week; at Asheville and Flat Rock; on the piazzas of the Carolina Building at the Red Sulphur, and in the parlors of the Congress Hall at Saratoga; at New York, at Washington City, at Richmond, and at the Mardi Gras in New Orleans.

2

No one was more delighted at her success than her twin brother Stephen Raoul, or Steeny as they seem to have called him. The two were inseparable, the circumstance of their twinship was a deep, spiritual bond between them, transcending the mere physical accident of external resemblance. The fact should have been better appreciated, as it does not ever seem to have been. If it had, Cordelia would have been better understood. For Steeny was Cordelia, not just the dark hair and flashing eyes, the tall figure and the smile, but temperamentally, essentially. Cordelia, released by the freedom of his sex from the restraints which

hampered her own. What Steeny did, what he determined, what he felt—openly and without any concealment—was what Cordelia was apt to do in a crisis, what she silently determined, what she secretly felt.

This does not signify that Cordelia was deceptive, or in any way insincere. But she was a girl, and no one ever asked her what she thought, what she felt. Girls were not supposed to think, it would have been immodest of her to have any feelings, or, at any rate, to discuss them. But Steeny was the living key to Cordelia, and they should have been warned. They should have interpreted the sister in terms of the brother.

And Steeny was "a catawamptious hellion," a "ringtailed roarer"—one picks these expressions at random from a mass of similar contemporary opinion; a "swanga buckra" according to the Waccaboo negroes who adored him —everyone adored him—with his canes, his white hats and his cheroots, his daredevil courage and his satanic temper. It is curious, no one ever realized, apparently, that Cordelia could turn frigid with rage; and yet the ex-

ample of Steeny was constantly manifest, except that he did not turn frigid, he flamed, he burned himself to a cinder in his sudden furies. It was probably the "dark Chantrell" streak in him, in them both. The perfect type of the young buck of his day, elegant, chivalrous, haughty, quick triggered, dissipated, if one will, in the brilliant and accepted manner of his time which no subsequent generation has ever achieved; generous, impatient, obstinate, foolhardy. The type of boy who had produced the Gold Rush, and gone storming out to "Bleeding Kansas" with the South Carolina Society. Very lovable, very exasperating, very difficult to manage.

There had been no writing in ledgers for him, no sojourn at the College. He knew his Latin and his Greek, his Classics, his Popes and his Drydens—knew them well enough to hold his own in any Charleston parlor, Raoul Chantrell had seen to that. At fifteen he had gone to sea, as apprentice back and forth to Bordeaux; at sixteen around the Horn to China, as "third blower" mate; at eighteen to Java as "dandy," the youngest dandy, per-

haps, in the whole merchant service. His brother Giles and Preston Baimbridge might sit in the counting room scratching at their ledgers, figuring tea, and spice, and silks—Steeny's career was on the sea, on blue water; a "limejuicer," a tall lad who sang strange songs.

3

And in 1858, when he was twenty, he took shore leave for a season while they were building the new *Cordelia Belle* for the China trade, and began singing them to Sally Penmarch. "Sally Brown" he called her, because of his favorite chanty.

"Oh Sally lives on the old plantation,
Aye, aye, roll and go!
The sweetest flower of the valley
Is my dear girl, my pretty Sally,
Spend my money on Sally Brown."

All Charleston knew what was going on, except the Penmarches! With it happening under her nose, in her own parlor a great deal of the time, at little musical evenings in the Charleston house—a flute, a pianoforte, and

"some of those treacherous compositions for four hands which seem to have been especially contrived for surreptitious love making"—Suzanne Chantrell knew exactly what was going on. Steeny was in love with Sally Penmarch. Not that there was anything surreptitious about his love making. He was "about as surreptitious as a brass band." Morning, noon and night, wherever and whenever, he made love to her, in the stiffly ornate and somewhat circumscribed style of that period, but more breezily, more unselfconsciously than, for instance, Giles with his Lucinda Prentice.

Suzanne Chantrell was perfectly well aware of it. Steeny was in love with Sally Penmarch. The question was, was Sally Penmarch in love with Steeny? It would be too ridiculous, Suzanne realized, if it should be otherwise. Her grandson to "get the mitten" from the granddaughter of the man she had once refused. How well the grapes would do at Penmarch! And if he should, there was no telling what he might do, go flying off to the ends of the earth, perhaps, and never come back. Suzanne was worried. She was very

devoted to Steeny, and she knew his tendency, although she did not suspect it in Cordelia, to "break all the dishes in the closet if he could not have the one he wanted."

She consulted Cordelia on the subject. What did she know about the affair? Had Steeny said anything? Was he making any progress with Sally? Cordelia thought that he was. She was getting it from both sides, her brother's impetuous rantings and Sally's rare, veiled confidences, and she opined that it was "a go," unless Steeny ruined his chances by nagging Sally too much. They all knew Steeny, he could never take no for an answer, and just now Sally was saying no with great determination, too much determination to be genuine, Cordelia thought. Sally was always stamping her foot, and going off and leaving him "with his mouth full of words," and Cordelia considered that a good sign, but Steeny must not overdo it. It was hopeless to try and rush Sally. Was there anyone else, Suzanne wanted to know? Oh, Sally had scores of beaux, but was there anyone else that mattered? No, Cordelia could not think of any-

one; she seemed to care for Steeny more than any of the others. Cordelia was pretty certain of that. Suzanne was reassured.

"And when do you propose to get married?" she asked her granddaughter. "Do you wish to become an old maid?"

Cordelia answered perhaps.

"How very original!" Suzanne remarked, and dismissed the topic.

4

But Cordelia had no intention of becoming an old maid. For a young lady of 1858, her journal is almost immodestly clear on that point. She had the keenest desire to be married, and as soon as possible. The fact is, Cordelia was passionately in love with Preston Baimbridge. She made no bones about it, in what, with the rest of her generation, she fondly supposed to be the privacy of her diary. Her all consuming desire for him—her pages on that subject are positively embarrassing—her resentment against the social code which prevented her from revealing to him her passion by so much as the flick of an eyelid; her

exasperation at his evident failure to appreciate the fact that she, Cordelia Chantrell, the belle of South Carolina, was his for the asking.

Preston Baimbridge was simply not in love with her. Cordelia was not a fool, she knew it perfectly well and admitted it to herself freely. Just because every other young man in seven states was head over heels in love with her was no reason why Preston should be, and he wasn't. Cordelia understood that. It was precisely this quality of aloofness, of indifference in him which had attracted her to him. That, and his flaming red hair. And because of it she was determined to have him; no other piece of china in the whole closet would do. Just as Steeny must have his "Sally Brown" so Cordelia must have her Preston.

How this was to be accomplished, Cordelia for the time being did not greatly care. It was sufficient, for the present, that no one else claimed his addresses. Preston was not much of a ladies' man, he very seldom came to parties, if he did not care for Cordelia it was clear that he did not care for anyone else either. As

for the future, Cordelia would find a way to appeal to him. When it was not in one way it might be in another with a man. There was "more than one kind of apple." Ships and birds were Preston's hobbies, ships and birds. Cordelia devoted herself to the study of ships and birds. This part of her diary is rather amusing.

"I am doing well with the ships," she wrote in one place. "Giles and Steeny are angels of patience, although they cannot fathom my sudden interest, but they put it down to my vanity over the new *Cordelia Belle*. Steeny has told me the names of all the parts and how to pronounce them. Giles is teaching me all about the rate of exchange at Canton, a stupid business I must say. Soon I shall be able to talk to Preston quite intelligently."

And in another place—

"Sakes alive, those birds! Mr. Audubon's books have come; there are eighty-seven folio parts at two guineas each, and four hundred and thirty-five plates, making in all one thousand and sixty-five birds. That is a smart of birds, I declare!"

They were out on a side table the next time Preston called—he came quite frequently to discuss firm matters with Giles. Cordelia was out, but the books were there. Preston noticed them and learned they were Cordelia's. The next time he came they looked at some of them together.

"I manage better with the birds than with the ships," she recorded. "I shall apply myself to the birds. We have examined one hundred and twenty-nine plates, that leaves three hundred and six plates. He touched my hand twice this evening turning over the pages, that is once every sixty-five plates. What a fool I am."

On his twenty-first birthday she gave him a paperweight of Italian mosaic—black, with a little green bird on a bough—which he seemed to prize very highly.

5

But Cordelia was wrong.

Preston Baimbridge did care for someone else. With that obstinacy of cross purpose

which controls human affairs, he cared very deeply for Sally Penmarch. And in the pride of spirit which was the essence of his sensitive, austere nature, he kept silent; for Penmarch was Penmarch and it was inconceivable that Penmarch should countenance his suit. Preston Baimbridge would rather have died than run the risk of exposing his father to the humiliation of seeing his son rejected at Penmarch because his social position did not correspond to the standards set up by that arrogant, narrow minded, plantation aristocrat, Royal Penmarch.

And then one day it dawned on Royal Penmarch that young Stephen Raoul Chantrell was having an affair with his granddaughter. Steeny Chantrell, the grandson of that chit of a girl from the Islands. Royal Penmarch had not forgotten, he had never ceased hating her. He might work himself into a rage over what he was pleased to consider the impudence of "that whippersnapper, that counting house runner, that packet rat of a sailor," but at the back of his mind when he thought of Steeny he saw Suzanne de Colignac, in her mother's par-

lor at her wedding reception, forty-two years before.

"I hear the grapes do not promise well at Penmarch this year . . ."

By cock and pye! The grapes did not promise well at Penmarch this year either. Not for any of Suzanne Chantrell's "grandbrats." Penmarch pass into the hands of a Chantrell! The thought nearly gave him palpitations. He would burn the place first. What did Clarissa mean by allowing her daughter to gallivant all over Charleston? Clarissa, for once in her life, had gumption enough to retort that Sally had been gallivanting all over Goosecreek, let alone Charleston, for the last ten years, and that if he couldn't prevent it she would admire to know who could. She was told to "shut your clamtrap, Madam!"

Royal Penmarch made himself excessively disagreeable to everyone for two days—he had sense enough to leave Sally alone, though—and then he hit upon a scheme which pleased him enormously. Whether or not it would please anyone else did not figure in his calculations. Royal Penmarch was always ready to

cut off his nose in order to spite his face—he determined that Sally should marry Preston Baimbridge. That would be a "fazer" for Suzanne Chantrell, to have it known all over Charleston that Royal Penmarch had preferred Preston Baimbridge to her grandson as a husband for Sally! Royal Penmarch was delighted with himself.

As for the Baimbridge boy, since the wind was blowing that way Royal Penmarch had no trouble finding excuses for him. His father was a merchant and nothing else, but he was a northerner. Education, social standards, the hallmarks of a gentleman were different at the North. One met quantities of New Yorkers and Bostonians of good standing at Saratoga who were in business. Charles Baimbridge was a good fellow, his son as well bred a lad as one could wish to find, a southerner to all intents and purposes. Royal Penmarch was being tremendously broadminded, and enjoying himself hugely. One is indebted to him, however, for one of the best contemporary appraisals of Preston Baimbridge available.

"The boy has breeding," he wrote. "He has

never forgotten that he is by birth a northerner, and always insists on it. I like that. He does not attempt to call himself a South Carolinian, although to all intents and purposes he is. He repudiates us, but he makes it a point to excel in our virtues. In this respect he is more of a South Carolinian than any of us. I know of no young Charlestonian of his age who is more careful of his personal honor, more elegant in his appearance, more courteous to the other sex. I am not a South Carolinian, he seems to say, but I do these things better than any South Carolinian among you. In this way he places himself beyond all criticism, but he does not admit that we have any claim to superiority in such matters. I like that too. After he has married Sally I shall have him elected to the St. Cecilia."

The last word had been spoken!

6

There are references to it, but no actual record of Royal Penmarch's interview with Charles Baimbridge. One can only infer what

transpired from what the latter told his son that same evening, at a sort of little family council. Mr. Penmarch had called on Mr. and Mrs. Baimbridge, he had been most clever and affable. He admired Preston so much, a statement which must have surprised Preston considerably. What was Mr. Penmarch driving at? Well, to come to the point, it was a delicate matter, and Mr. Penmarch had been the soul of tact and courtesy, but if an alliance could be brought about between the two families he would be overjoyed. Preston did not understand at all.

"An alliance?" he asked his father. "Is Mr. Penmarch thinking of turning merchant?"

No, that was not it. One gets the impression that Charles Baimbridge floundered around considerably; he seems to have been somewhat dazzled by the possibility of this alliance with Penmarch. So does Mrs. Baimbridge. Not a mercantile alliance, they explained to Preston, a matrimonial one. Himself and Sally Penmarch.

"Myself and Sally Penmarch?" the boy cried, with his eyes popping.

Yes. Preston must realize that marriages were most likely to be happy when arranged by older heads—there was a good deal of this, in the best 1850 manner. An alliance with Penmarch would mean a great deal to him in after life, it was a great honor to him, to them all. Preston let that pass. Why had Mr. Penmarch chosen him? In all Charleston, why should he be selected? And what about Steeny Chantrell? In that involuntary question Preston had betrayed himself, and they knew it. So, he was a little jealous of Steeny Chantrell; then he admired Sally Penmarch! Oh, she was "all sorts of a girl"—poor Preston could not long keep up a pretense of indifference. Yes, he admired Sally; but he had thought that she and Steeny . . .

"Does she know about this?" he insisted on finding out.

Well, they told him, Mr. Penmarch would scarcely have taken steps if he had not first satisfied himself concerning his granddaughter's attitude. As for Steeny Chantrell, everyone knew that she had refused him time and time again; it was only his peskiness that kept

him running after her so brazenly. There was an accepted procedure in these matters, Preston must remember. Of course, there was nothing definite, nothing promised. At the proper time he might present his suit formally; until then he must comport himself with the decorum which the situation demanded.

"I could have been doing that all along," he recorded privately. "I could have presented my suit all these months, and stood up to Steeny. It was for my father's sake that I didn't, but I have more pride than my father. Not really, though, because if she'll have me this way, I'm willing."

And at the Penmarch mansion a similar scene had taken place.

There are very complete accounts of it, in three separate journals, so that it is possible to reconstruct it in every detail. Clarissa, the unfortunate Clarissa, tiptoeing breathlessly to her daughter's room half an hour before to put her on her guard, to inflame her against her grandfather, to remind her of Steeny Chantrell! An idiotic blunder which only Clarissa, at the threshold of her decisive conflict with

Royal Penmarch, could have committed. Sally, utterly undeceived as to the nature of her mother's protestations, coming, in her own way, to her own decisions; decisions which it is not the purpose of these pages to analyze or to judge, merely to record as bearing on the subsequent actions of Cordelia Chantrell. The family gathering, finally, in the library, and Royal Penmarch cocking his eye at Clarissa.

"Sally, my dear, I presume your mother has warned you of what I wish to tell you . . ."

A certain amount of "clamtrap" shutting on his part, equally distributed between his son and his daughter-in-law—Sidney was present, if not significant, at the interview—and Royal Penmarch came to the point. Sally was to marry Preston Baimbridge, and what did she think of that as an idea? Who said so, Sally wanted to know. He, her grandfather, said so. Sally did not appear impressed. Why should she marry Preston Baimbridge? There were reasons; he was a very nice young man, he had a promising future before him, he would make a good successor some day at Penmarch

—since "your dear mother was not able to give you a brother"—they had known each other all their lives. What was that? Sally did not care for him that way? Fiddlesticks, what did she know about it! She was not to talk nonsense. Still Sally was not impressed.

"I don't have to marry him if I don't want to," she flared at her grandfather.

Clarissa, the feckless Clarissa, mistook the statement for a decision.

"Don't let him talk you into it, honey," she advised Sally—and with those too eager words ringing in her ears Sally made her decision, or altered it. Clarissa had spoken once too often; or was it Steeny who had been nagging her too much? Anyway—

"You're mighty bold," Sally told the old man. "I haven't made up my mind, no I haven't, but Mr. Baimbridge can court me if he wants to."

## 7

He came in state two evenings later—Royal Penmarch was not wasting any time—with his father and mother. A reluctant, embarrassed

lover, dragged in the chains of a punctilious etiquette before his lady. One sees the sensitive, flaming haired youth, always conspicuous in any gathering, suffering tortures of self-conscious confusion while they sat solemnly around for a while discussing the everlasting question of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and Mr. Douglas's precious theory of Popular Sovereignty. Two subjects of pressing importance to South Carolinians in the year 1858, but scarcely compatible with the real purposes of this suffocating visit of ceremony. They had the grace, finally, to send the two young people out into the garden.

"Sally, my love," her grandfather suggested, "why don't you carry Preston out into the garden, if your mother has no objection; have you, Clarissa?"

Clarissa had no objection. She was completely defeated by Royal Penmarch; her only consolation the occasional satisfaction of a spiteful remark.

"You might show Preston where the Pride of India tree used to stand," she sniffed on this occasion.

They went out and sat among the roses, in the beautiful Penmarch garden; one of the loveliest of Charleston gardens, a fairyland in season of wistaria and azaleas, verbenas, crepe myrtle and yellow jessamine. A ludicrous, tongue tied pair of lovers, surely, although no detailed report of their interview is available. Preston was desperately in love with her, which can only have made it doubly hard for him. How to persuade her that he was sincere and not merely reciting a rehearsed sentiment. How to make sure of her without seeming to take advantage of a prearranged situation. How to account for his apparent previous apathy without cheapening himself. But it seems that he said a rather charming thing. She had picked a rose—one of Mr. Noisette's white Lamarques, Preston carefully noted—and was standing in front of him admiring it. And when nothing had been uttered for quite some time, and the silence was become unbearable, he looked at her and said—

"Sally, I have wished often to bring you roses. But I feared that the roses of Alber-

marle would be no match for the roses of Penmarch!"

As for Sally, quite aside from the influence her mother's importunities may have had in arousing her to a contrary course of conduct, she was simply running away from Steeny Chantrell. She was afraid of Steeny, rebellious, up in arms against his impetuous self-assurance, his exasperating certainty of her. There can be no doubt of that now, in retrospect, although on that June evening in the Penmarch garden, it is a question whether Sally really knew what she was doing. But she listened to Preston, and laughed at him a little, and gave him the white Lamarque rose. They managed, somehow, to conclude the business.

They went back into the house and told the others. The discussion of the theory of Popular Sovereignty was interrupted. Madeira and cakes were brought out. Clarissa, the uncourageous Clarissa, pretended to be delighted. Half an hour later, Sally wrote a letter to Steeny. She was engaged to be married, she had accepted Mr. Baimbridge, and—

". . . Please be reasonable, Steeny, and don't make a miration over it. I've told you all along I wouldn't marry you, but you would insist. Please be sensible about it now and let me remain, always your true friend, Sally Penmarch."

She was already dreadfully afraid, terribly aware of her mistake, unendurably ashamed. She did not sleep at all that night, but sat in her window staring out at the garden, at the Bourbon, and Bengal, and tea scented China roses, the Provences, and Armosas, and Antherosas; at the Lady Banksias, and Baltimore Belles, and Cherokees; and at the white Lamarques . . .

## CHAPTER III

### FOOL'S PARADISE

### 1

WHEN Cordelia came home that evening she found Sally's letter to Steeny on a salver in the hall. She recognized the handwriting, and wondered at once what it could be that Sally had to say so urgently to Steeny. The note, it seemed, had been brought around a little after nine o'clock by the Penmarch major domo. Steeny had gone out with Giles to a meeting—something to do, it seems, with the Commandery of the Knights of the Golden Circle—and had not yet returned.

Cordelia was very curious, a little worried; what could Sally be writing to Steeny about so suddenly that she could not have told him that afternoon at the Prentices', that could

not wait until they saw each other the next morning? They were all going to the Noisette greenhouse, Cordelia knew, to look at his new hybrid rose. Was it an answer to something? Cordelia put the note back on the salver and went to her sitting room, determined to wait up for her brother. He would look in on his way to bed if he saw her light burning.

She sat for perhaps half an hour writing in her diary—her account of these events is very complete—and pretending to read Mr. Fitzhugh's eulogy of the principles of slavery, entitled *Cannibals All, or Slaves without Masters;* but actually thinking of Steeny a little and of Preston Baimbridge a very great deal. He had seemed more animated, Preston, during the last two days she had noticed, better groomed even than usual, quite talkative for him. That very afternoon he had joined her carriage on the Battery, and made her a pretty compliment, something rare from Preston, with a catch in his voice that she had not known before, as though he were all in a fidget over something.

"I think perhaps Mr. Audubon's birds are having an effect," Cordelia concluded, not unnaturally. "He looked at me today as though he meant to tell me something."

And then there was a noise downstairs. The boys were coming in. She could hear Steeny laughing and talking, something about William Walker and the possible annexation of Nicaragua; then he was suddenly silent, and Giles was saying goodnight and going to his study; and then again silence. Cordelia went to her door and listened; Steeny had not come up; there was not a sound below. Cordelia was certain that something had happened; Steeny had found the note, and something had happened. She knew that Steeny was in trouble, just as certainly as though it had been herself. She went downstairs immediately, treading softly so as not to awaken her grandparents.

2

At the foot of the stairs Cordelia almost screamed. Steeny had been to fetch his father's pistols from the library, and was standing in

the hall in front of the mirror, right arm outstretched, taking sights at his reflection. At the sound that she made he turned, and his face was chalk under the candle light, his mouth a trembling fury, his eyes deep pools of misery. So she described the countenance which he turned upon her, in the vivid style which so illuminates her writings.

But before she could even call to him he began to speak, in a dreadful voice, pinched and breathless; a monotonous repetition of infuriated sentences, of which she could afterwards only remember the menacing refrain.

"I'm going to kill him—he was my friend, and he's made love to her behind my back —I'm going to kill him—I'm going to kill him—"

Cordelia understood what had happened. Sally's note was on the table, opened and torn; it could only mean one thing. Cordelia went at once to Steeny, she forced him to put down his pistol, quietly she led him to the sofa and got him to sit beside her while she smoothed the dark curls on his temples. Alone of them all she could almost always manage

him. And when at last for a moment he stopped babbling of friendship, and treachery, and killing, she made him tell her the thing that was hurting him so mortally.

He sat perfectly still now, his hands listless between his knees; Cordelia noticed how unaware of her he seemed to be, of her arms around him, of her little soothing words breathed in his ear. He sat and stared across the room all of a heap, while he told her. Sally Penmarch, his little "Sally Brown," had sent him a letter. That evening while he was at the meeting hearing about William Walker and his expedition. He had seen her only that afternoon, and she hadn't said anything. And now she calmly wrote to say that she was engaged to be married, and he must be sensible about it, he mustn't make a miration. Did Cordelia understand, Sally Penmarch was engaged to be married, married to another man, Sally Penmarch, his Sally, because she was, they all knew it, she knew it herself, his Sally, not any other man's. But that was all leather and prunella, Sally was just being proud and pesky, she didn't know what she

was doing; did she think he was going to let her go like that; stand for any man stealing his girl—Steeny was arousing himself into renewed fury—calmly sit by and acknowledge the corn while any man, he didn't care who it was, walked off with Sally? Well, he wasn't! He'd call him out, sneaking behind his back to make love to Sally, he'd call him out and he'd kill him, by Gad he'd kill him, the blackguard, the—Cordelia told him to be quiet, and not talk so loud, he'd wake up the dead.

"Who is it?" she asked him.

Steeny sprang to his feet, widely gesticulating, trembling with rage as the name came upon his tongue. When he spoke of Sally he was helpless and incoherent but the thought of the other set him blazing.

"Who is it? It's Preston Baimbridge," he told her.

3

Preston Baimbridge . . .

And some time after that Cordelia realized that she had fainted. Now it was Steeny who

was sitting with his arm around her shoulders, bathing her forehead with water which he had brought from the dining room, and spirits of vinegar which he had gone upstairs three at a time, he explained, to fetch from her dressing table. When she opened her eyes she found his own staring at her, and in them the dismay of a sudden comprehension had for the moment taken the place of his own distress. For Steeny understood without her telling him.

"Cordelia dear," he was saying to her, "I never dreamed, with all your other suitors—I wouldn't have told you like that—I never dreamed!"

"Yes," she admitted. "I'm in love with him. I can't help it. I expect I want him as badly as you want Sally. There isn't another soul but you that knows."

One can only attempt to reproduce the sense of this conversation which she recorded afterwards in broken, stricken sentences, without form or sequence, just as they occurred to her. They talked and talked, down there in the hall, all through the long night while the

candles guttered one by one and surrendered to the dawn.

What could they do, what could they contrive in the face of this paralyzing engagement? There was something so incomprehensible about it, so unforeseen, so unnatural. Preston had never paid court to Sally, she had never seemed especially attracted to him, if she had often run away from Steeny it had never been to Preston. On the other hand, there was her note; she had accepted Mr. Baimbridge, she was engaged to be married to him, the thing was final. Cordelia was the first to come to her senses on that point. Time and time again that night Steeny burst out into passionate furies of speech, in which he proposed every imaginable foolhardihood, elopements, "explanations," even suicide. He couldn't live without Sally; if she persisted in marrying Preston he would carry her away, he would post Preston as a sneak, if everything failed he would shoot himself. As an antidote to the grief and despair which were poisoning him Steeny could think of nothing but violence and tumult. And al-

ways Cordelia reproved him with gentle severity—she was much the calmer, apparently, much the more self-possessed of the two—until in the end she had brought him to better judgment, to more well advised reasoning, to a more seemly mood.

"Let us behave with decorum," she repeatedly advised him, and the ponderous, old fashioned phrase takes on a certain dignity, under the circumstances.

That was it, there was nothing left but decorum. Steeny must remember that he was a Chantrell, and Chantrells didn't take on in public when ladies refused to marry them. Sally had a perfect right to bestow her hand on whom she pleased, and it was for Steeny to summon his chivalry, his elegance, his pride too, and be the first to wish her happiness. Yes, and Preston also. Steeny must promise Cordelia to do nothing stupid, nothing unworthy, nothing at all to betray his hurt, to publish his defeat.

"No self-pity, especially!" she exclaimed once, in French.

Cordelia was altogether fine during that in-

terview; she was wise, and full of responsibility towards the obligations of that crisis; she kept clearly in front of them both, in plain, sturdy words, the necessities of conduct incumbent on them, and when, inevitably, Steeny blurted out a questioning challenge regarding her own dilemma, she found somewhere the courage to deceive him, since any wavering on her part must shake his fortitude. Throughout that first long strife with Steeny—for there were to be others—it seems to have been Cordelia's purpose to make sure of one thing. To keep Steeny from losing his head completely; to keep him from doing harm to himself; to keep him from doing harm to Preston.

"Girls can say yes, and they can say no," she reminded Steeny, "but they can never say please! I should have admired to have Preston care for me, but moping won't help matters if he doesn't. I expect when the time comes I'll marry someone else, just as many another girl has done, and none the worse for it after all!"

Steeny was too much engrossed in his own affair, or he would surely never have been

taken in by such a speech from Cordelia—if she actually said all that—such a submissive humility of spirit so foreign to his knowledge of her. Only at the last, when they were finally going up to their rooms, did she let fall a word or two of her real feelings. It was not the end, at that—for all its finality—this engagement; engagements had been broken before; Steeny must not give up hope entirely. He must behave himself, but he must not give up hope. They must do what they could, the two of them, to help each other. Steeny had to ask her to let go of his arm, she was holding it so tightly that it hurt.

But in her own room, after she had kissed Steeny goodnight—there was little left of the June night—Cordelia was not calm, or self-possessed, or submissive. She tried to write down everything that had happened, and it is there that one sees the catastrophe in her heart; in those desperately hurried, sometimes almost incoherent sentences; in those savage paragraphs in which she poured out her refusal to accept this conclusion to her dream, her determination to cheat Sally of her prize;

in that page on which there are only two words, heavily underscored.

*"Oh, Preston!"*

After that, one learns subsequently, she too sat in her window staring out at the garden—at the Bourbon, and Bengal and tea scented China roses, no doubt; at the Lady Banksias, and Baltimore Belles, and Cherokees; and, very likely, at the white Lamarques . . .

4

They all met the next day at Mr. Noisette's place, as though nothing had happened. Steeny had gone around the first thing in the morning to the Penmarch mansion, leaving Cordelia to explain the situation to Giles and the grandparents. And at the Penmarch mansion Sally had come out into the garden to see him for a moment. She looked just a little "miffed," he told Cordelia afterwards, and for the first minute or two they simply stared at each other; but then he remembered his little speech of felicitation, and wished her happy; and she thanked him and stammered something about being sorry, and gave him

her hand, and there it was. Very little said on either side, and Sally quite obviously relieved to find that he was taking it so quietly. Only when he touched her hand she turned away and would not look at him. One imagines his eyes filled with questioning reproach.

"I'm glad if you're happy," he tried to convince her, and left her.

It was not exactly what he had expected. Cordelia told him that he had behaved famously, his grandmother kissed him very tenderly, thinking of a morning forty-two years before, his grandfather buried himself behind the Charleston *Courier*—Giles had already gone to the Exchange—and an hour later Steeny was at the French florist's with his sister. Cordelia had insisted on his coming; no moping at home, nothing like that, he must go about his affairs and observe his social engagements. She even made him put on his new high collared coat and his white *chapeau*. He was dreadfully spoiled, that boy, but the truth is, Cordelia was afraid to leave him by himself during those first days.

They stopped on their way for Lucinda

Prentice, and the Eggleston cousins called through the gate that they were coming too; a Templeton or so was picked up as they went along, each group attracting another; until there was quite a little crowd of them when they went in to Mr. Noisette's, chattering among themselves about how the Frenchman's success with his roses was really due to the fact that he had appropriated John Champney's famous Pink Cluster. Quite a gathering of belles in *poux de soie* hats and *paille de riz* bonnets, in flounced *mousseline* and cambric dresses, with shot silk parasols and mittens cuffed with lace; quite an assemblage of beaux in colored waistcoats, and black silk cravats tied in voluminous knots around their high, stiff collars. Quite an aroma, also, of old West India bay water, and Extract of Queen Victoria, and Balsam of Mecca, bergamotte, frangipane and patchouly, to compete with the roses which they had come to admire. And there, waiting for them, was Sally Penmarch. And with her Preston Baimbridge and his mother. Sally had come in the Baimbridge carriage.

## 5

Cordelia had not expected that; not to see Preston. He should have been at the counting room with Giles. But there he was, looking very pink—rather silly, she found the humor to notice—holding Sally's parasol "as though it were the Pope's hat." And the others were evidently a little surprised too. Preston Baimbridge with Sally Penmarch, and Mrs. Baimbridge apparently disposed to "make an occasion" of the scene. Glances were being exchanged, and Cordelia nudged Steeny.

"Do it nicely," she coached him.

Steeny went over to Preston and made him a stiff, embarrassed little bow.

"My congratulations, Preston," he said. "You're a very fortunate man. Sally, I've already seen you once this morning—Mrs. Baimbridge, my respects to you, ma'am."

Preston turned a deeper pink, Sally perhaps an even paler white than usual—one is indebted to Lucinda Prentice for these details—and immediately there was a confusion of exclamations and questions, a tremendous oh-

ing and la-ing, in the midst of which Cordelia suddenly lost her head; unless, indeed, she really did it on purpose, and the latter seems more likely in the light of certain subsequent events. For Cordelia was already formulating plans, she had devised a method of attack, she had arrived at certain suspicions concerning this engagement. While Steeny had been pitying himself and, one feels certain, dramatizing his disaster, Cordelia had been thinking. She seems to have done most of the thinking for the two of them during the next few months. At all events, in Mr. Noisette's shop, she laughed, and Cordelia's laughter had in it always something of bells, something of trumpets.

"Why yes!" she exclaimed, so that they all turned and looked at her, but she kept her eyes on Sally. "Don't you know? Sally has given Steeny the mitten, and is going to marry Preston!"

It was an extraordinarily cruel thing to say in front of Steeny, but she flashed him a look which silenced him—the boy had gimp and composure when he chose—and turned again

to Sally who was standing perfectly still, staring at the floor.

"My dear, you surprised us!" Cordelia went on. "I declare, you and Preston, you've been so sly about it all—don't look so angry, Preston! I was only teasing. I hope you'll be very, very happy."

She was all smiles herself, the terrible Cordelia, beaming at Preston who was already beginning to smile back at her—his fool's paradise was not yet destroyed—and at Sally who was not smiling at all.

"You're perfectly vile, Cordelia!" she finally blurted out and reached, perhaps unconsciously, for Steeny's arm—and just then Mr. Noisette came bustling in with the new rose, and there was something for all the rest of them to do. It was a beautiful rose, they all agreed, but Preston had to go and spoil the day for Mr. Noisette.

"I think I prefer the old white Lamarque, at that," he decided, with a sidelong glance at Sally. But of course Cordelia did not know what he meant.

Out in the street, on the way home, she took her brother's arm.

"I'm sorry, Steeny," she told him, "but did you see the look on Sally's face? I tell you, there's something mighty queer about it all. Just wait until I find out."

But Steeny was furious, and would not speak to her for a whole day . . .

6

Cordelia, it has already been said, had arrived at certain suspicions concerning the engagement, suspicions which suggested to her certain methods of attack; for at no time did she really admit the finality of this matrimonial arrangement, the impossibility of disrupting it and separating Preston from Sally. Nor was her determination in the least blameworthy, as she saw it. Sally, she felt convinced, was not really in love with Preston; she was in love with Steeny. Some external influence had been brought to bear on her to cause her sudden selection of Preston; or else Steeny himself had driven her to it by his insistence and cocksureness, for Sally was a queer girl,

given to fits and starts of temperament, and all manner of "gyrations" when her independence or her pride were touched.

In any case, this engagement was the result of some special circumstance—Cordelia proposed to do all in her power to ascertain its nature—and did not represent the true state of Sally's mind. Cordelia had begun to make sure of that at Mr. Noisette's. The thing to do was to pin Sally down, drive her into a corner, and make her admit that this was so. After that something could be devised to reconcile her to Steeny. As for Preston, Cordelia simply had no scruples there. She wanted him for herself, if it could possibly be managed, and he must consequently not be allowed to go anywhere else. Cordelia would have preferred it, naturally, had he come to her of his own free will, given her the gratification of his first choice; but Preston at second, at third hand was better than not at all. So, without any pride whatever, and with a perfectly blunt simplicity of motive, Cordelia reasoned. She wanted Preston, that was all.

But it was not easy to pin Sally down. Al-

ways a secretive little soul, she deliberately avoided Cordelia after the incident at the florist's. Throughout the weeks that followed in town, before the exodus to the Virginia Springs—Cordelia thanked her stars that Grandfather Raoul had given up the idea of going to Saratoga that summer—before the long, trundling journey in the family coach to the White Sulphur; to those "cabin" rooms on the piazzas without any dressing tables or bed carpets, without washstands for that matter unless one raised a rumpus. And at the Spring Sally was still very standoffish, so that Cordelia had little opportunity of seeing her in private; there was little excuse now for any particular intimacy between the Chantrells and the Penmarches, especially under Royal Penmarch's eagle eye; and anyway Preston was there to claim Sally's attention.

But that was it, Cordelia soon noticed, Preston did not appear to be claiming it so successfully. Sally was enormously popular; engaged or not, there was always a crush of young men around her at the hops and picnics, all the more so since Preston did not seem

to object at all. As though he had made up his mind to it that Sally should enjoy the last summer of her girlhood—they were to be married in November—without the hampering shadow of his presence always at her elbow.

"A fine pair of lovers they make!" Cordelia remarked sarcastically. "Either he's afraid to claim her now that he's won her, or he knows already that he never did win her really. I must try and find out, but it's pathetic to see him just mooning around. Pathetic—what am I saying, it's heavenly! And she certainly doesn't give two shakes of a lamb's tail for him. They're almost never together. This isn't going to last."

In fact, as July turned into August, it was Steeny who seemed to be almost constantly at Sally's side, in spite of old man Penmarch who, it is true, spent most of his time in the card room playing carte and tierce. Sally was an expert at battledore, she was an accomplished horsewoman, she danced divinely. And in all these activities Steeny had been her frequent partner in the past and remained her unexcelled companion. Steeny did not pride

himself on his battledore, to be sure, but on the dance floor or in the saddle—all the Chantrells rode beautifully—Preston could not hold a candle to him. And so they were riding and dancing again together, Steeny and Sally, all the long days through, while Preston mooned and Cordelia watched.

"Are you making love to her?" she finally asked Steeny one evening.

Steeny was inclined to resent her question, and she called him a big foofoo.

"Because there's no reason why you shouldn't," she went on. "It's as plain as the nose on my face that she doesn't care two pins for him. She was simply running away from you when she accepted him, you mark my words. Either that, or they made her do it. You can win her back, if you still want her."

Steeny told his sister not to be a ninny, what did she take him for, a stuffed owl—and went off whistling *Sally Brown.*

7

"And I'm not a stuffed owl either," Cordelia recorded.

While Steeny was whistling *Sally Brown,* and no doubt singing it again to his lady love, Cordelia was seeing quite a little of Preston. It was perfectly natural; Cordelia, it seemed, was not feeling up to much that summer; Preston had never been anything of a ladies' man, and loathed picnics and all such goings on; when all the rest of them had gone off somewhere, it was not extraordinary that he should find himself often in Cordelia's company—especially when she took such careful pains to post herself where he could not possibly help seeing her! And if the matter of ships was somewhat remote at the White Sulphur, the woods thereabouts were remarkably abounding in birds! They went on many strolling expeditions together—always in sight of the verandahs, lest propriety be offended, for they were not at Saratoga where young ladies and gentlemen thought nothing of gallivanting everywhere by themselves—during which Cordelia frequently had occasion to regret that space had not permitted the inclusion in her boxes of Mr. Audubon's helpful volumes.

It was a part of her good sense, one learns,

in this campaign which she was quite frankly conducting, always to treat him with complete composure and detachment. No attempt at flirtation, no personal twist to their talk, no effort to appeal to him in any way except through the placid channels of companionship. Most of the time she simply listened while he discoursed of his birds. Never once did Sally's name cross Cordelia's lips. But that Preston was increasingly distressed and unhappy she had no doubt. And finally one day she was rewarded; one day late in the summer, when they were all getting ready to leave.

Preston told her the whole story, the whole history of his engagement to Sally, as he knew it. Came right out with it, unexpectedly "between two birds," as Cordelia described it, and asked for her advice. Cordelia was considerably flabbergasted. At the story, now that she had it at last—his end of it, at least—and at hearing it from Preston rather than from Sally.

"He likes me," she wrote triumphantly, "or he would never have told me a thing like that. He was in trouble and he came to *me*."

As for advice, what sort of advice did he mean? What he should do, Preston explained. Did Cordelia think that Sally had only accepted him because it was a prearranged affair between the two families? Did Sally perhaps suppose that he had only asked her for the same reason? But why did he imagine such things, Cordelia asked him. One false step, she realized, and Preston would never speak to her again.

"Because it's perfectly evident that she's ashamed of something between us," Preston put it, in his odd, rather charming way.

Cordelia was thinking very hard. Tell him the truth, as she now was convinced of it; that Sally had said yes to him "just to show" Steeny? No. Preston would not believe that of Sally. He was evidently very much in love with her, Cordelia was obliged to swallow that. Tell him what, then? It was desperately important not to make a mistake.

"Perhaps Sally needs a little reassuring," Cordelia decided on her answer after a considerable time, while Preston was poking holes in the red earth with his cane. "Why don't

you just have it out with her? Ask her frankly if she's worried about anything?"

Preston thought that he would, and thanked her . . .

Cordelia told Steeny just as soon as she could find him, before Preston would have an opportunity to see Sally.

"There's no time to fool around," she advised him. "Are you making any progress, because now's your chance."

Yes, Steeny thought he was making a little progress. To be frank, if Cordelia wanted to know, he had asked Sally again to marry him that afternoon. Break her engagement and marry him. She had refused, of course, but he would not have dared do that a few weeks before.

"Never mind," Cordelia assured him. "Preston's going to talk to her, and that will give Sally her chance. It all depends on what you can do between now and the time he sees her. Now scoot!"

8

Five hours later it was all over. There was a conjurer doing tricks after supper, and Cor-

delia found herself unavoidably immobolized in the audience with her grandmother who adored such manifestations. Outside on the verandah, she knew that Preston was talking to Sally. Once, during the entertainment, Steeny passed near her on his way to the billiard tables, and to her questioning glance, he returned a confident smile. He had done what he could, it seemed to say, and the prospect was not unfavorable. Cordelia sat and hugged herself, while Professor Merlin swallowed a variety of penknives for her edification.

And then Professor Merlin was through; the assemblage went streaming out onto the piazza; and Cordelia came face to face with Preston. He was just coming to look for her, he told her, and everything was settled. He had had a long talk with Sally, and what he had been afraid of was not so. He wanted to thank Cordelia again, and now he must go and fetch Sally's shawl. Cordelia stood there quietly and told him that she was mighty glad. In the parlor, someone was singing *I Have Found Thee*. A silly song which proclaimed that—

"Had I wooed thee, had I won thee,
Oh, how blessed had been my fate;
But thy sweetness hath undone me,
I have found thee, but too late."

The next day they started home.

## CHAPTER IV

### FIDDLESTICKS

### 1

CORDELIA would not acknowledge defeat. Her journal of this period is filled with defiance, with stratagem, with a reckless determination to prevent this seemingly inevitable wedding at Penmarch in November. Her point of view regarding Preston is clear enough. Sally once removed from his reach and Cordelia was confident now of her own power to win him. His whole behavior at the White Sulphur had shown that. In his trouble he had come to her; in the reaction from a greater disaster he would come to her again. At the right moment Cordelia would know how best to appeal to him. There was no time more propitious for catching a man than at the close of an unsuccessful love affair. Cordelia had

not learned that from the pages of *Goaey's Lady's Book,* nor yet from *The Wedding Guest, a Friend of the Bride and Bridegroom,* but she had learned it, nevertheless.

As for Sally, Cordelia had no patience with her. The girl was cranky, obstinate, perverse. She had committed one folly in June, and had capped it with another in August. That in her interview with Preston at the Spring Sally might have been actuated by certain conceptions of good faith, of promises made and accepted and consequently binding, this received no consideration from Cordelia. Such misguided idealism was not in Cordelia's nature, the fallacy underlying such loyalty rendered it revolting to her. Sally was a little fool who did not deserve to be happy, since she did not possess gumption enough to seize her happiness with both hands and cling to it. Of course, there was the possibility that Sally really cared for Preston, but Cordelia scarcely entertained the notion. It was too obviously absurd. But in any case, Sally was in Cordelia's way. Nothing else mattered. It is all very plain and ruthless. The terrible Cordelia.

She got no help from Steeny during those days. The boy was too mercurial, too hot tempered to be of any use. He was being proud and melancholy now about the affair—one suspects him of reading too much Byron—and persistently refused to have anything to do with Sally. And along in September Preston, with magnificent guilelessness, chose him for one of his groomsmen. Giles was to be best man. That disposed of Steeny as an active factor in the situation, since it was evidently not the part of a groomsman to make love to his groom's bride elect. But Cordelia made him accept. She wanted him on amicable terms with Preston, and she wanted him at home. No flying off to Nicaragua, for instance. Steeny would have declined, but Cordelia found ways of persuading him that it would be noble of him to stand at Preston's side. She understood her twin brother as no one ever understood her.

September, October, November. The wedding was fixed for the third Tuesday in the month, at noon.

## 2

But at eleven o'clock on the morning of the wedding—Cordelia's account is fortunately most precise, up to a certain point—at eleven o'clock, Sally could not be found anywhere at Penmarch. Her wedding dress of satin and Honiton lace was spread out on the bed; downstairs, among the garlands and greeneries, the rooms were swarming with relations and guests, all of them admiring the vast wedding cake and the big mounted piece, two nougat hearts bordered with meringues, pierced by an arrow of gilded candy. The groom had arrived some time before, and been secluded in the library by the unruffled Giles. Royal Penmarch was snickering at Suzanne de Colignac Chantrell—the Chantrells were all there, staying of necessity at the house, since Waccaboo was so far away. One gleans these details from a score of garrulous sources. But Sally could not be found anywhere, one hour before the time set for the ceremony. They were running around in a panic upstairs, her mother, her bridesmaids, wondering how long they dared wait before telling the others.

But one person upstairs was not worried. Not about Sally's disappearance. Cordelia, one finds—she had been asked, finally, to be a bridesmaid, to replace a delinquent Mills—Cordelia knew where Sally had gone, had, in fact, seen her go. Cordelia refrained from telling Mrs. Penmarch so, but Sally had gone riding early that morning; slipped out of the house in her royal blue broadcloth habit with the glass buttons, and her military cap, and her Beebe and Costar gauntlets; slipped out to the stables—no one had thought to ask there in the general commotion—to mount Lochinvar, and away towards Wahoo Swamp. Cordelia had caught sight of her crossing the garden from her window and had watched her.

And not only that, but if anyone had stopped to notice Steeny's absence, Cordelia would not have been worried about him either. For Cordelia had sent Steeny after Sally. Sally was gone, she had called him out of his room to tell him, she was running away, some harm might come to her. Perhaps she had gone to the river, didn't he understand? He must go after her, down the Wahoo Road, he must catch her.

And when Steeny was objecting that it was Preston who should be notified, Cordelia had told him not to be a born fool. By the time he could reach Preston at Albermarle Sally might have done anything, killed herself perhaps. Steeny had gone then without another word.

And at eleven o'clock Sally had not come back. Neither had Steeny. Cordelia could hardly keep her fingers steady to fasten her dress. He had found her, of course—he had had plenty of time at a gallop, before she could turn off the long Wahoo Road through the pine woods—he had found her, and this time he had not let her go again. Cordelia had expected that, intended that, as soon as she had seen Sally starting off. It was a heaven sent chance. That Sally was trying to run away from her own wedding, to her grandmother Templeton's probably, Cordelia had not the shadow of a doubt. The thing was to catch her in that frame of mind, sweep her off her feet, run away with her, before any of the Penmarches and Baimbridges could get after her. With all his pride and scruples, Steeny could be counted on to behave intelligently if he ever

found himself face to face with Sally in such a mood. He would take her himself to her grandmother's, elope with her, Cordelia was not concerned with the practical details of their subsequent arrangements. The important thing was that there would be no wedding that noon at Penmarch. So, at half past eleven, Cordelia was reasoning, as she prepared to go downstairs and join that crowd of people awaiting a function which, she was convinced, would never take place.

3

But it did take place just the same, after a fashion.

It is a very great pity that no record by Sally Penmarch of these events in which she played so curious a part is available. One is informed through other sources of what she did, but one can only conjecture why she did it. Why she accepted Preston in the first place, why she did not claim her freedom at the White Sulphur, why she went riding on the morning of her wedding, and why she came back from that ride without Steeny—he found her, and argued

with her, and pleaded with her, holding on to Lochinvar's bridle for nearly two hours, but to no purpose—these matters remain unexplained. It is clear that she loved Steeny, and equally clear that she persisted in marrying Preston. The only clue is a remark which she made long afterwards, in reference to these affairs.

"It was my mother's fault," she said.

Had Clarissa been whispering again behind the closed doors of Penmarch, all these weeks? Whispering tactlessly to Sally? That may have been it, partly. But one prefers to think that a certain sense of obligation to Preston entered into it; that Sally, "having," as old Mr. Templeton once aptly observed, "made her bed, had decided to lie in it."

At all events, just as the clock was striking twelve and everyone was craning his neck towards the stairs down which the bride was to appear—they were simply having conniptions upstairs, it seems, with Clarissa in mortal terror of telling Royal Penmarch that Sally was not there—Sally herself stepped through the front door.

"Sally Penmarch!"

It was Cordelia's cry that brought them all whirling around, crowding up to the pale girl in the royal blue broadcloth habit with the glass buttons, until Preston forced his way through the press.

"Wherever have you been, Sally?" he asked her, but pleasantly, without reproof. In the background, Royal Penmarch was vigorously damning his entire family.

"I'm sorry to be late, Preston," she told him, "I was riding. I'm ready now, if you don't mind my riding habit."

"It looks mighty becoming," was all he said.

Royal Penmarch began roaring for Clarissa to come down "and attend to your fool daughter, Madam!" Preston went back to his place beside Giles, near the improvised chancel. There was a confusion of groomsmen treading on each others' toes, a rush of bridesmaids down the stairs, a general hurra's nest for a moment while some of them gathered around Sally to smooth her hair, to draw off her gloves, to fix her habit. Married in a riding habit, had anyone ever heard of such a thing! Cordelia was

looking everywhere for Steeny. They were short one groomsman. Steeny was not there. For a while Cordelia scarcely knew that she was living, and it is no longer from her account, but chiefly Suzanne Chantrell's, that one is able to reconstruct the scene so minutely, down to the exact uttered words.

Sally was ready, about to take her grandfather's arm. In the hasty disorder of chairs pushed aside to provide an aisle for the bride's unexpected entrance, no one seemed to realize yet that one of the groomsmen was absent. It was time to start—and in the midst of the commotion Lucinda Prentice saw Cordelia suddenly step up close to Sally and whisper something to her very intently. Sally looked startled, and Cordelia seemed to repeat what she had said. It was all done in a few seconds. Sally turned away, and Lucinda thought that her face "looked like stone." No one besides Lucinda appears to have noticed the incident, and except for a cryptic sentence Cordelia never referred to it.

"I was in a cold rage," she wrote, "and I said something terrible to Sally." It was to remain

for a certain Godfrey Loring to discover what it was that she said, long afterwards.

And now they were moving towards the chancel, and as Sally passed Lucinda she was biting her lip until Lucinda thought the blood must surely come. In the hush which settled down, Cordelia, for some reason, laughed. The laugh that was bells and trumpets, but all jangling and discordant. The ceremony began. Very soon they reached the moment of declaration.

"Preston, wilt thou have this woman . . ." Preston would.

"Sarah, wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband . . ." the familiar words came winding to their close, and Sally's reply went ringing through the hall.

"I will not!" she answered.

4

Sally would not marry Preston after all. One is tempted to remark that there appears to have been no end to that young woman's matrimonial uncertainties. Perhaps that is not quite

fair, as in this case certainly she supposed herself possessed of a sufficiently valid reason. But for that it seems best to await, in their proper chronology, the revelations of Godfrey Loring.

"I will not!"

She turned abruptly from the chancel, without a glance at Preston or at the scandalized rector, and walked down the open space towards the door. No one said a word. Even Royal Penmarch was, for the minute, completely silent. She gathered up her gloves, her military cap, and then at last she stopped for a moment to look at her fiancé.

"I won't do it," she explained. "I'm sorry it happened this way. No one is to ask me any questions. I'm going to my grandmother's for a spell."

But Preston was determined, naturally, to ask her questions. He broke away from Giles and started for the door, in a stammering bewilderment of interrogation. Why—why—what——

"I can't discuss it with you, Mr. Baimbridge," she cut him short. "I don't blame

you, and I don't ask you to forgive me. That's all."

Blame him? It was apparent to everyone that Sally assumed that Preston understood what she was talking about, and his silence in the face of it could only corroborate this impression. Giles came up to him quietly and led him away to the library, and Royal Penmarch found his profane tongue. It is perhaps not necessary to report verbatim the explosion of abuse with which he sought to overwhelm his granddaughter. Many of the ladies present were shocked into hysterical tears, but Sally simply smiled.

"Oh fiddlesticks!" she replied, and was gone.

Gone in a sudden gale of laughter which swept the hall, the shrill, uncontrolled laughter of Clarissa Penmarch.

"My stars!" they say she was almost screaming, pointing at her father-in-law. "Look at you! She's gone, do you hear? She isn't going to marry him after all—you thought you were so smart—you thought you could fix everything your own way—well, she doesn't care a snap for what you say! It serves you

right, you poor, miserable old man—do you hear, it serves you right——"

And a great deal more—it was not a pleasant scene, this public outpouring of private spites and hatreds—until Royal Penmarch nearly went at her with his bare hands.

"Good God Almighty!" he finally roared. "Why doesn't someone take that woman away!"

It seems to have all been pretty shameful; a complete breaking down of decorum and good taste, so offensive to the most cherished tenets of that punctiliously elegant society. There was talk afterwards of dropping Royal Penmarch from the St. Cecilia, but a consideration of his years on the part of the Board of Managers saved him from what, to him especially, would have been a suffocating disgrace. But it served to unmask the bigoted, overbearing boor that Royal Penmarch was. Just before she left the house that day, as soon as she had had time to pack, Suzanne Chantrell handed him a bunch of grapes on a plate!

People had begun to leave immediately, of course—the Baimbridges, without waiting for

Preston, had gone at once, like good, sensible persons—for already the contagion of family dispute and partisan recrimination was spreading. The air was full of contention, while in the dining room the meringue and nougat hearts turned messy, and dribbled. Sally had a good reason, Preston must have done something; Sally was no better than a common jilt; Sally had spunk; Sally was vile; Preston was all sorts of a boy; Preston was probably a scoundrel. Kept a mistress in all likelihood. The Baimbridge faction and the Penmarch faction; the merchants against the planters.

The thing went on for many moons, embittered by such rumors as reached the outside world of the subsequent incidents at Penmarch that afternoon, and of the part played in them by some of the Chantrells.

## 5

Cordelia was simply in a whirl. In the space of fifteen minutes she had traversed the extreme boundaries of exaltation and despair; experienced triumph, rout and victory snatched from defeat; and she had "said some-

thing terrible to Sally." She hardly remembered anything that happened after Sally's breath-taking response at the chancel, until two facts began to assail her intelligence. Steeny was not there. And Preston was still in the library with Giles. And that was important. Steeny could wait; must wait, since she had no idea where to look for him—but she must go right away to Preston.

In this present crisis, in this great trouble which had come upon him, he must find her at his side. Giles would be splendid, of course, but the first feminine consolation to minister to his distress must be hers. He must grow accustomed to her presence, recognize her as something solid, something comforting in the chaos of his disaster. There was no time more propitious for catching a man than at the close of an unsuccessful love affair. That was most important.

That she herself was the immediate cause of his distress does not seem to have disturbed her in the least. She felt herself, perhaps, so competent to indemnify him. It was what she had said to Sally that had upset the apple cart, she

realized that perfectly since she had said it with that forlorn hope in view, but no regret escaped Cordelia. In time, shame and even a sort of remorse, but still no regret. Under the same circumstances, she would always have done it again. The terrible Cordelia.

She slipped down the hall and into the library—and found herself confronted with a dismaying scene. Preston was standing at one end of the table talking very intently. Giles was facing him at the other end, a little back from the table, silent and anxious. No one in the room apparently noticed her quiet entrance. And in front of Giles, between him and the table, was Steeny, in his Wellingtons and a riding crop in his hands. He had come back then, to face the music. Cordelia was proud of him. But what Preston was saying was not pleasant.

"And how long have you been conducting yourself in this manner, Mr. Chantrell?" he was asking Steeny.

"Good Lord, Preston!" Steeny exclaimed. "You know perfectly well I've been in love with Sally ever since I can remember. The

whole town knows it. I was conducting myself in this manner, as you call it, long before you ever thought of marrying her."

Giles touched his brother's elbow, and Steeny looked down at his boots.

"I understand you were making advances to Miss Penmarch at the White Sulphur?" Preston was icy. "After you were aware of her betrothal to me?"

Yes. Giles was looking more and more anxious.

"And I daresay you have continued to do so since our return from the Spring. You, one of my groomsmen!"

That was not so, Steeny assured him. He had acknowledged himself beaten at the White Sulphur; from then on he had meant only good will towards Preston; he had not said a word to Sally; he had scarcely seen her. He had not wished to offend Preston by refusing to be his groomsman. This last was not strictly true, Cordelia remembered thinking. Not quite strictly. It was she who had persuaded him; but Steeny was evidently not intending to mention her at all. Giles took a step.

"It's all so unusual, Preston!" he pleaded. "The circumstances in the case are so extremely special—you must admit that!"

Steeny made an impatient gesture, and Giles stepped back. Steeny would stand on his own feet, of course. No extenuations. Preston did not appear to have heard.

"But this morning," he continued, "you did see her again?"

Yes, Steeny had already told him that. Sally had gone riding, and he had gone after her; he had been worried about her, it was a curious thing to go riding on her wedding morning, and it was useless to try and notify Preston. Why had he been worried? Well—he hesitated a good deal—Steeny didn't care to say.

"I'm not a felon on trial!" he reminded Preston.

Perhaps not, Preston replied. And then what?

Then? Steeny had caught her, on the Wahoo Road, riding hell for leather, and when he managed to stop her she had seemed in very great distress. How? Well, sort of dis-

tracted. Yes, that was the word, distracted. She had talked queerly. Steeny had been frightened. Cordelia was listening with all her ears. She was to write it all down afterwards, much of it in dialogue, as was her frequent practice.

"Hell's commotion! It's not surprising!" Giles burst out again. "Do be reasonable, Preston. Sally Penmarch was not in love with you, that's as plain as a rail fence. You know that!"

Cordelia found this funny. She had always been given to understand that gentlemen never mentioned ladies in their disputes. That was a part of the code. But they were all constantly referring to Sally, discussing her as though she were "a piece of bad news." Preston told Giles to mind his own business.

"And then *you* talked to her?" he challenged Steeny. The italics are Cordelia's.

Yes, Steeny had talked to her. For nearly two hours they had talked. He couldn't help it. He was in love with her, would always be in love with her, and he had told her so again.

He had begged her to marry him, to elope with him.

"I knew she wasn't in love with you. She told me so. . . ."

But she had refused to listen to him. She had gone back to Penmarch. Alone. Steeny had followed afterwards. He had of course not presumed to appear at the ceremony, under the circumstances. He had gone in to the library from the garden, and he had been writing a letter to Preston, telling him the facts of his behavior, when Giles and Preston came in.

"I'm sorry, Preston," he concluded. "We've been lifelong friends. I've treated you shabbily, I know that. I couldn't help it. I'd do the same thing again. I was writing to tell you, so you would know what I had done and be in a position to take whatever steps seemed best to you. Now you're here, and I'm ready to give you any satisfaction you may require."

Giles was slowly nodding his head . . .

6

For the first time, Cordelia was frightened. So far, nothing very terrible had been said.

They had been standing there like two dignified turkey cocks, saying disagreeable things to each other, but after all rather ludicrously. Explanations were always ludicrous. Crying over spilled milk. But the word satisfaction frightened her. Cordelia knew what that meant, and the likelihood of such a thing had not occurred to her before.

She understood that gentlemen frequently shot and killed one another; public opinion was not able to prevent this senseless method of settling certain disputes. Nor, indeed, did it appear so very incongruous to Cordelia. One of her Eggleston uncles had been shot in a duel, as the result of a quarrel between "submissionists" and "fire eaters," in the blue cockade days of Nullification. It was the code of honor. She would have scorned any gentleman who failed to respond to its rigid requirements. If a gentleman had wronged another in certain well defined ways he must stand ready to receive the other's avenging fire. It was a strict obligation on the one hand, an unquestioned privilege on the other.

But not in the case of Steeny and Preston!

Two boys who had known each other all their lives. Two such friends, sons of two such closely united families. It would be too ridiculous. Steeny was not entirely to blame. Preston could be said to have wronged him too in stealing Sally from him without a word of warning. On the sly, behind his back. Cordelia herself, alone, was to blame for the final wrong done to Preston. Not Steeny at all.

And another realization overwhelmed Cordelia. If anything like that were to happen—if Preston claimed his privilege and challenged Steeny, if they fought, even though not fatally—it would mean an end to all her hopes. There could be nothing further between her and Preston, not before the world, if once he had stood face to face with Steeny on the "ground." And if one of them should be killed!

And the only way to prevent it would be to tell Preston what she had done. Cordelia had not thought of these things when she had spoken to Sally. She had not considered the possibility of Steeny's acting in this way. He knew she was in love with Preston, couldn't

he have remembered her? But no, men must always behave in a highfaluting way about their honor. Why, if he had persuaded Sally at any time since June he would have come to Preston immediately, Cordelia saw that now. It simply mustn't happen. Cordelia clung to the portière which concealed her and counted the hammerlike blows which were the beating of her heart. She was very, very frightened. It couldn't be. But Giles was taking it seriously, as a matter of course.

"I must remind you," he was saying to both of them, very quietly—Giles was always impeccable—"I must remind you that if Mr. Baimbridge decides to challenge there must be no further talk between you. The code does not permit direct communication between principals. Furthermore, if I may presume to suggest a course of conduct to Mr. Baimbridge, it is my belief that a challenge passed in this house will constitute a grave breach of decorum. I beg you to adjourn, at least beyond the boundaries of Penmarch."

There was something dreadfully fascinating about the way they did it, Cordelia could not

help thinking. "No wonder the practice survives," she wrote. It was the ritual of it, the punctilious precision of speech, the meticulous observance of traditional niceties, the grave courtesy with which men prepared to kill one another which appealed to them. And a whimsical idea came to her afterwards. "It's the seconds who enjoy it most," she decided. "Giles didn't know it, but he was having the time of his life telling them what to do, and one of them his best friend and the other his brother." But at the time Cordelia had other things to think about, things that began suddenly to happen very quickly.

Preston must have been in a towering fury. Cordelia had not appreciated it before, she had not had a chance to see his face, she had not supposed him capable of such insanity of passion. The flaming red hair perhaps. He had held himself erect, motionless, faultless, his voice hardly raised, until at last something must have snapped.

"You're a blackguard, Stephen Chantrell," he stated, out of a clear sky. "I'm about to count three. If you are armed defend your-



nderson College

self, otherwise I'm going to kill you like a dog."

He made a quick gesture—the other two never stirred apparently—and the barrel of his pistol rapped the edge of the table before him.

"One—two—three——"

It happened in a flash. The words, the pistol, the shot. The bullet went by Steeny's head and plugged a hole in the painted panel above the mantelpiece behind him. Cordelia had flung herself forward, knocking Preston's arm aside. Just in time. She was clinging to him, she had him helpless; a big, powerful girl. Preston dropped the pistol on the floor and covered his face with his hands. Giles was quite superb.

"I think we had better go," he remarked. "Mr. Baimbridge has preferred to forfeit his privilege. Come, Cordelia."

7

But it was not to be as simple as that. The shot had been heard. People were running through the hall. In a moment the door was pushed violently open and Royal Penmarch

came in, slamming it again behind him. It is strange that he should not have guessed immediately what had occurred, seeing Stephen Chantrell there, but the sight of Cordelia, standing a little apart from Preston, probably misled him. Deeds of violence were not committed in the presence of ladies.

"I heard a shot," he announced. "What are you all standing around for? What's going on here?"

Let it be recorded to the honor of both the Chantrell boys that neither of them attempted to tell him the truth. But Preston was going to. Cordelia saw that at once. He had his mouth open to speak when she stopped him.

"It's all right, Preston," she gently insisted, and her brothers did not prevent her. "Everything's all right. There was an accident, Preston's pistol went off, that's all." She picked it up off the floor and put it on the table. Then she went to the fireplace. "I'm afraid the panel's spoiled, Mr. Penmarch," she told him.

And then she smiled at Preston. She put into it all that she could not possibly say to him—"that I forgave him, that it would be all

forgotten, that he must keep his mouth shut for all our sakes. And that I loved him." One should, perhaps, be horrified—although on a certain night in June, Steeny, brought into Preston's presence, would have surrendered to just such a murderous impulse, and Cordelia would still have loved him—but it is all too pitiful. She was bidding Preston goodbye, for she felt then, with staggering certainty, however much she may have denied it at other times, that he was gone from her forever.

And Preston understood. That is to say, he understood the least and most insignificant part of it. That she wanted him to keep silent. For he bowed to her profoundly—he did not look at the Chantrells or at Royal Penmarch —and then he turned on his heel and walked quickly out of the room and out of the house.

# PART II

# THE BONNIE BLUE FLAG

## 1858–1864

"Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag
That bears a Single Star."

*Songs of the Confederacy, 1861–1865.*

# CHAPTER I

## AFTERCLAPS

### 1

THE miserable affair attracted more attention in Charleston than even the increasingly engrossing subject of the "Black Republican" Party. The question as to whether or not the new political group, with its violent antipathy for the South and for slavery, could ever succeed in gaining control of the government became temporarily of less importance, during that December of 1858 in the Parishes, than the domestic problem surrounding the Baimbridges and the Penmarches, and according to the best information the Chantrells—at least that "young hellion" Stephen Raoul, who, viewed in the light of a more retrospective contemplation does not ap-

pear to have been so very much of a hellion after all!

They were still at it in February, when society gathered in town for the races and the St. Cecilia Balls—at one of which Sally Penmarch should have claimed her privilege, as the most recent bride present, of being taken down to supper by the President. That was why Royal Penmarch had set the date of the wedding so late, some people maliciously insisted. But there it was, Sally did not attend the Balls, and Sally was not a bride, and Steeny had gone immediately to sea again, and what did it all mean?

Sally's extraordinary and scandalous performance at the wedding, for public sympathy was now very largely with Preston; and that shot in the library at Penmarch. There was no use pretending there hadn't been a shot fired in the library. All the negroes for miles around knew it. There was supposed to have been some sort of accident; well, it was a mighty queer accident to have happen at such a time, with Steeny Chantrell in the room with the Baimbridge boy. In fact, for a while, the

legend seems to have flowered in Charleston that Steeny had attempted to shoot Preston. It reflects credit on Lucinda Prentice's discretion that among all these speculations there should have arisen no rumor involving Cordelia.

But along with the rumors and speculations one or two facts gradually established themselves as the solid residue of all this to-do. In the first place, Preston Baimbridge had left Charleston. The circumstance of his absence had become apparent immediately at the Exchange and in the Chantrell and Baimbridge counting room, but it was supposed for some time that he was merely seeking an escape from notoriety in travel; that he had gone for a while to the New Orleans branch, or to Mobile; at all events, that he would return as soon as the scandal had blown over.

But January passed, February, March, and Preston did not return. At the Chantrell office it was simply said that Mr. Baimbridge would be absent indefinitely, and some pretense of awaiting him was maintained. At Albermarle nothing at all was said, and no one found

the courage to question the Baimbridges directly. But little by little it was understood that Preston had left Charleston for good. And not only that, but that he had disappeared. His own family did not know where he was.

"Prudence Baimbridge simply won't say a word these days," Suzanne Chantrell wrote in March, 1859. "The boy has gone and they have no idea what has become of him. They think perhaps that he has gone to Kansas. Poor souls. I had a long talk not long ago with Charles Baimbridge about it, and all he would say was that Preston had come home on the afternoon of the Penmarch affair in a terrible state. Wouldn't talk or eat. Went to his room, and they heard him tramping around for hours. The next morning he was gone. Simply left a note to say he couldn't bear what had happened, couldn't show his face in Charleston again. That he wanted to be by himself, away from everything and everybody that could remind him of that day at Penmarch, and that they mustn't try to follow him. I feel so sorry for them all. I think that

Charles Baimbridge imagines he is to blame somehow. It was he and Royal Penmarch who fixed up the match in the first place. Personally, I suspect there was more in Preston's note than Charles told me. From the way he talked I believe the boy said something of the sort to his father."

As for the rest of it, Suzanne Chantrell was vastly perplexed. "I don't know what to think," she wrote elsewhere. "Whatever possessed Sally to do such a thing! Of course no one's seen her. They keep her chained to Penmarch. She did have the grace to write to Mrs. Baimbridge, but she didn't explain anything. I declare, the way young people behave these days is something scandalous!

"And I'd give anything to know what happened in the library afterwards. I know that Giles, and Steeny, and Cordelia were there with Preston when this precious accident everybody's talking about took place, but I can't get a single word out of them. If a pistol was fired accidentally someone had it in his hand, and what reason could there possibly have been for that? I don't believe this acci-

dent story at all. Whoever fired the pistol fired it deliberately. And I'll wager it was Preston, and that's why he's run away. He and Steeny must have had words, and then the Lord only knows what happened. But I might as well talk to a brick wall as try and find out anything from my grandchildren. Whatever it was, those three have evidently determined not to tell. It's all mung to me."

It was all "mung" to everybody, but Preston was gone for good.

2

And just as most people were beginning to forget about it, and becoming accustomed to seeing Charles Baimbridge's pathetic figure passing in and out of the Exchange, the whole thing was again brought to mind by the announcement that Miss Sarah Penmarch had married Mr. Stephen Raoul Chantrell. One cannot, somehow, refrain from a gesture of relief at this final settlement of the troublous Sally's matrimonial indecisions! At last they were united, those two stormy ones.

They eloped, naturally, between two voyages

of Steeny's. There was no other way with Royal Penmarch mounting guard over her. But his vigilance was not sufficient; Sally could still go riding, with Clarissa to see that Lochinvar was ready—grandmother Templeton seems to have had a hand in the affair too—and it was after all in her royal blue broadcloth habit with the glass buttons that Sally was married; in her riding habit, in fact, that she went aboard the packet which was to take them to Nassau. Royal Penmarch never spoke to any of the Chantrells again; and when Raoul Chantrell died, in 1860, it is said that he came out to see the funeral go by and refused to take off his hat. There only remained to him two years of life in which to savor such satisfaction as he may have derived from that graceless act. A graceless man, Royal Penmarch, all his days. . . .

The young married couple went to Nassau for their honeymoon, and, not entirely unexpectedly, decided to make it their home. Steeny, as long as he remained in the *Cordelia Belle* with a prospect of commanding her, would be absent a great deal on distant voy-

ages which, in spite of his marriage, it was not his intention to abandon for a while; Sally was not anxious to face alone, or nearly so, the hostility which she foresaw in Charleston, a hostility which was the result of the general dislike of her grandfather seasoned by a lively disapproval of her own carryings on. Her own home at Penmarch held no very great attraction for her; between herself and the Chantrell relations-in-law, especially Cordelia, there must inevitably have arisen a certain restraint born of unpleasant memories shared; in Charleston itself there would always be the Baimbridges to reproach her goings and comings. So Sally seems to have reasoned it out. It was infinitely more simple to remain at Nassau, to begin a new life there, create a new circle uninfluenced by recollections of the affair with Preston Baimbridge. As between herself and Steeny it was a dead issue.

"You're not to ask me any questions, and I won't ask you what happened in the library," Steeny reported to Cordelia that she had stipulated.

It would be pleasant enough in Nassau.

The Hamiltons, who were cousins of the Penmarches, were among the most influential families in the island, descended from both "refugee" and "conch" stocks; there was an elegant society, centering around Government House, much of it sprung from old Georgian and Carolinian loyalist ancestry driven from the Colonies at the close of the Revolution by the persecuting fury of the Whigs; the place itself was extremely lovely. Steeny purchased a small plantation on Clifton Point, at the fashionable western end of the island, and there, in 1860, their son was born. A fair Chantrell, like his uncle Giles, in spite of the dark strains concentrated in him. Royal Penmarch Chantrell. Sally must have done that deliberately to annoy her grandfather! Although it would have been a pity, at that, to let the old name die out completely. . . .

3

And to Cordelia, Charleston was a desert, life a colorless monotony. Sally had taken Steeny away; Giles too was married, to his Lucinda Prentice; and Preston was gone. . . .

One must return to Cordelia; one must look into the dreary pages of her journal at this period; pry a little into the secret grief which only therein she gave expression to; expose, however diffidently, to public inspection the depths of her private laments. It is necessary to know what Cordelia was thinking during those months, what she was doing, alone with her regrets.

And Cordelia was thinking of nothing but Preston. Through page after page of her voluminous diary one looks in vain for any reference to contemporary affairs, any discussion of public topics, any but the most passing mention of social and domestic matters. The pages are filled with Preston; the minutest details of the scenes in which she had been associated with him—she seems to have spent a great deal of time elaborating her recollections and expanding her earlier accounts—and the pathetic refrain of her misery.

*"But Chantrells dark bring misery stark . . ."*

It is, primarily, a record of indescribable desolation. She sought no comfort, enlisted no sympathy; she talked to no one—with

Steeny away there was no one to talk to—unburdened herself, betrayed her disaster to no one. Her grandmother never suspected the sickness of heart concealed beneath the serene exterior of Cordelia's pretense; only on occasions did Suzanne Chantrell marvel at her granddaughter's obstinate failure to choose a husband from among the scores of presentable young men who came courting the belle of South Carolina. She had "apparently determined to become an old maid," and could anything be more ridiculous, more unnatural, but "far be it from me to interfere. Cordelia knows what she is doing."

And Mrs. Baimbridge, certainly, was far from understanding the gentle courtesy shown to her by that quiet, reserved, rather majestic girl who never asked any questions but whose great dark eyes were so frequently filled with mute concern. Cordelia said nothing, and walked unaided in the ways of loneliness.

A loneliness peopled with illusions, inhabited by the figures of dreams, furnished with the presence of Preston Baimbridge. She was always picturing him there, at her side, torturing

herself with the recollection of other hours spent in his company, drugging herself with the disastrous pretense of still other imaginary hours from which she must always awaken to a realization of greater solitude, of more impenetrable despair. Daydreams in which he came to her, companionable and intimate, and they passed through scenes of her devising, the pleasant, familiar Charleston scenes, speaking in words of her own rehearsing. Other waking dreams in which he came to her, and the sleepless hours were filled with the hopeless vanity of empty delusions. And other moments again, when the dreams were shattered, and she told herself the truth; sitting at her *escritoire* staring at an infinity of bitterness. But not always passively, silently like that. Sometimes in a turmoil of panic, pacing the floor of her room, wringing her hands, pressing cold fingers against her pale lips, swept by a tempest of suffering.

"Crying over spilled milk!" she once chided herself. "I ought to forget him, put the whole thing out of my mind, put an end to this repining and this everlasting self-deception

which is the worst folly of all. I shall never see him again. There it is, perfectly simple, six words. Like having a first tooth out. Tie a string to the knob and slam the door. But it's no use, the door won't slam. I wonder if Time really cures all ills? Can it be possible that one day I shan't care any more? How horrible that would be. But it isn't so. I shall go on like this forever. If I live to be fifty it will all be just as if it had happened yesterday."

As for what he had tried to do in the library at Penmarch, Cordelia had passed through her black hour of dismay thinking of it. Preston had wanted to murder Steeny, he had raised his hand and fired. An instant more and Steeny would have been dead, dead on the floor between them, a bullet in his head.

"How *can* I love him? Why am I not filled with horror and shame?"

But she did love him. Preston had been insane, blind with rage and jealousy, just as she had once seen her own dear Steeny. And Preston had not killed Steeny. Steeny was alive, married and happy.

"No blood was spilled. There's no blood on Preston's hands. It's not wrong of me to love him still. . . ."

She was making an absolute cult of Preston, burning herself at the fire over and over again. The books he had touched—the precious Audubons—the chairs he had used. He had stood here, so, on such an evening; it was at that end of the table that he had sat on such an occasion. In the streets, in the shops, at the theatre, at the balls in St. Andrew's Hall, everywhere it was the same. Every corner of the town held its association.

"I don't think we were ever in this street together. . . ."

"That's the shop where I saw Preston the day he came back from the College. He was wearing a pale blue waistcoat, and when I told him it was becoming he said that he had chosen it with great care."

"They played the *Amelia* quadrille; the last time I heard it I was dancing with Preston."

Her journal is brimming with such remarks. She went nowhere without being reminded of him; she could not bear the sight of

certain places, the recurrence of certain functions too relentlessly crowded with memories of him; her daily existence was a constant memorial; in her room, when the roses bloomed, she always kept a bowl of white Lamarques. . . .

And all the time, of course, she was looking for him, for some trace of him. Scanning the personal notes in every journal she could lay her hands on at the Charleston Library; inspecting the passenger lists of packets for some chance reference; watching the obituary notices. But her needle was buried in too great a hay stack. Ships and birds were his interests, and the whole universe was filled with ships and birds!

4

It was inevitable that Cordelia should eventually seek relief from her torments in a vigorous activity, some mental outlet for her full blooded energies. But whereas many another woman of her day, under similar circumstances, would have indulged in a multitude of manias—it was a day of many manias—Cordelia abstained from such diversions.

She did not fling herself into the cause of

hydropathy, she did not become a vegetarian, she did not go in for the tambourines and bells of the "Spirit Rappers." Nor did she even develop the slightest interest in the movements of more permanent importance such as that for Women's Rights. It was in 1848 that Lucretia Mott, and Martha Wright, and the rest of them had held their first convention; they were now annual events, calling together all the feminist, temperance and social reformers of both sexes in the country; but Cordelia was not attracted by them.

Cordelia did not read *The Lily;* she did not imitate Amelia Bloomer's "bifurcated costume" and exhibit herself—as Susan Anthony, and Lucy Stone, and the Grimké sisters, and countless other devotees of Bloomerism had not hesitated to exhibit themselves—in baggy Turkish "bloomers" and gaiters, a short jacket and knee skirt, and a "gypsy" hat. She did none of these things. She discovered, instead, and developed her own mania for politics, for the current affairs of her time, for the great questions of slavery, and expansion, and non-interference which were so profoundly stirring

the South. She read, she studied, she talked. And men frequently listened.

The Missouri Compromise; the Dred Scott decision; Kansas and Nebraska; the Republican party; Mr. Douglas, Mr. Toombs and Mr. Yancey; John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry; the disintegration of the Democratic National Convention at Charleston; the whole turmoil of the North's interference with slavery and with the South—Cordelia suddenly engrossed herself in these matters; she came to her ardently sectional conclusions concerning them; she embraced the philosophy of slavery, the whole imperialistic cause of southern expansion and independence; she gave her convictions stirring words and a ringing voice—a second Angelina Grimké, but on the other side—and preached the gospel of Yancey and secession.

"The South must be free!"

Perhaps on certain days of discussion and exhortation—while her family wondered what had come over her that she should so declaim and prophesy—she managed not to think of Preston for whole hours at a time. . . .

## CHAPTER II

### AULD LANG SYNE

### 1

"THERE will certainly be war," Charles Baimbridge told her solemnly one day. "Mark my words, civil war. What you are doing down here, all of you, endangers the Union, and they won't stand for that at the North. I tell you the North will fight to preserve the Union from which you are all the time talking of seceding!"

Cordelia thought better of her first impulse to remind him that there had been a time not so long since, some fifty years before only, when a great part of New England had earnestly desired, written and talked secession. It depended whose ox was being gored. But she refrained from any argument and simply did her best to reassure him.

"There'll never be war," she insisted, "no matter what happens. It takes two to make a war, and the South doesn't want war. All we want is to be let alone. If in order to accomplish that we have to secede, well and good, but I doubt whether even your crazy northern Republicans would attempt to prevent us by force. That would be too ridiculous. The very idea of union implies willingness and consent. You can't force people to be united if they don't want to be."

"And one party to a contract can't suddenly break it without the consent of the other party," he retorted.

"Oh come," Cordelia smiled at him. "If I don't like the Episcopal Church I can leave it any time I please. Now isn't that so?"

Charles Baimbridge could find nothing to say to that . . .

## 2

Cordelia was not thinking of war. She was interested only in the Presidential campaign, and in the struggle between the two principal Democratic factions. She would not believe

that Mr. Lincoln and the "horrible Republicans" could win.

"The thing is to beat Douglas," she wrote, "and elect Breckinridge, for the Republican rail splitter will be nowhere. We must beat Douglas. If we don't, we'll leave the Union, that's all."

But during that summer of 1860 Cordelia began to realize her mistake. The Republicans did matter, and the rail splitter was dangerous. All through those months of parading rallies—the Douglas Guards, the Lincoln Wide Awakes in their glazed caps and mantles—in the midst of that furious campaign uproar, the Republican Axe emblems and rings, and the Rail Splitter's pins were sweeping the North. It was no longer a question only of beating Mr. Douglas, it was a question of beating Mr. Lincoln and the North.

"Douglas is bad enough," Cordelia exclaimed, "but if the Republicans win, ye gods! Well, a Republican victory will simply dissolve the Union immediately. I should think they'd understand that at the North and prevent it if they really want to preserve the Union. The

only possible way to save the Union is to elect Breckinridge."

Even then the thought that a victorious Republican government might attempt to maintain the Union by force had not occurred to Cordelia.

But they were marching up there at the North all the time, marching with torches and transparencies in military formation, and the South must march too. And from every district in South Carolina they came, the Breckinridge Minute Men; pledged in secret, so some people insisted, to march on to Washington if necessary to prevent a Republican inauguration; wearing the blue cockade on their hats, the old Nullification cockade. Cordelia had one, and wore it proudly.

And on Wednesday, November 7, Cordelia stood with the crowds in front of the Charleston *Mercury* office and watched the bulletins. The country had voted the day before, enough returns had accumulated to show the irrevocable result, the "fatally obstinate election of a minority candidate." Mr. Lincoln would have under two million votes, the three other

nominees together some two million eight hundred thousand. But the leader, Mr. Douglas —the Little Giant had held his own—would only total a little over a million. The Black Republicans had won.

Cordelia stood with the crowds and watched —no one thought of going to business that day —stood a little aside and wholly absorbed in the midst of the cheering tumult around her; for they were all cheering, devotedly, defiantly, cheering for an independent South. They cheered when the *Mercury* hung out the palmetto banner with a single star on a red field; when they heard that a ship in the harbor was saluting the flag of South Carolina with fifteen guns; when news reached them that the District Court had closed, that the port officials had resigned, that the Postmaster and the Navy Agent had declined to hold office under a Black Republican administration.

"The authority of the United States has ceased in South Carolina," the Grand Jury had informed the District Attorney.

Everywhere the blue cockades were flowering . . .

3

The Union was dissolved. Cordelia never questioned the matter.

"We must go our way, and the North theirs," she wrote. "November 6th, 1860. That date will never be forgotten in southern history, for on that day a new nation was born. May God preserve the South."

It was fitting too, it seemed to her, that her native South Carolina should be the first to raise the flag of independence. The convention of the Legislature, summoned for December 17 at Columbia, adjourned almost immediately to Charleston; and there, in St. Andrew's Hall, on December 20—standing on the dais under the Sully portrait of Queen Victoria in her coronation robes, and facing the gilt and velvet chairs—Mr. Jamison of Barnwell put the question:

*"Resolved: That the union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of the United States of America, is hereby dissolved."*

"Those in favor of the resolution?"

The deep chorus of Ayes went rolling

through the chamber, an organ chord of unanimous assent.

"Those opposed . . ."

The Ordinance of Secession was become history.

Inside of half an hour the news was all over the town. The *Mercury* had a special edition; guns were booming across the harbor; in the streets people were shouting and cheering.

"South Carolina has seceded!"

4

Cordelia went out that evening to witness the ceremony of ratification, the signing of the engrossed parchment containing the portentous words; and of course they found room for her, the fervent Cordelia with her blue cockade, in St. Andrew's Hall. She saw the procession enter, led by the President of the convention—and as they passed her many of them bowed, so that she was "near to getting a stiff neck from returning their courtesy"; she heard the roll call and watched each member as he added his name to this new Declaration of Independence; she gazed in a state of

"indescribable emotion" at Mr. Jamison when he finally held up the document before the assemblage and proclaimed the existence of the Independent Commonwealth of South Carolina.

And outside in Broad Street when they came out there was Charles Baimbridge, looking at her with tears in his eyes.

"You have done a terrible thing," he told her. "A terrible thing, all of you. You have destroyed the Union. You are blind, insane!"

Cordelia begged him to hush; this was not the time, not the place; the crowd was not in a temper to hear such utterances. But Charles Baimbridge drew himself up and pointed a trembling finger at the building from which the delegates were pouring.

"Today, in that building," he rang the words out, "an act of the most supreme and criminal folly has been committed. I have lived in this city for twenty-three years. I have been proud of it and I have loved it. But tonight, after all these years, I thank God that I was not born here, that I am not a South Carolinian. I thank God that I am a Northerner. And

I say to you this—Perish the Independent Commonwealth of South Carolina!"

He was superb, Cordelia admitted afterwards.

But there was a roar from the crowd, a nasty humming of hostile voices, a commotion of menacing gestures. In a moment there would have occurred something disgraceful. Cordelia stepped quickly in front of Charles Baimbridge and faced the threatening tumult.

"Are you Douglas plug-uglies? Or Black Republican rail splitters?" she asked them—and people who saw her record that she was a magnificent, inspired figure, a pale Juno with flashing eyes. "Stand back!" Some gentlemen from the convention had already come to her side, and she turned to Charles Baimbridge. "Won't you accept my arm, sir," she offered, "and let me see you to your door?"

The splendid Cordelia . . .

5

They were parading the militia around the streets later on in the evening—the Charleston Battalion, the young gentlemen cadets from

the "Castle"—bands were playing, guns pounding, rockets and bonfires flaring; some families had illuminated their houses. People were cheering and singing still along the sidewalks. Charleston was celebrating.

But Cordelia was not in the mood. It was a solemn thing that had happened; a proud and stirring thing, but grave and momentous. Words had been spoken, names signed, a new adventure was begun into the unknown future. It was foolish to shout and tramp about like that. Her own home, the houses of most of her friends, were silent and dark, their inmates composed and thoughtful, inclined to a deeper, more reticent emotion. The thing could not be taken lightly, after all. Not arrogantly, with boisterous vainglory.

"I went out into the garden," Cordelia wrote. "In spite of my joy and faith in what we have done I felt sad and anxious. Now that the time had come it was not easy to accustom oneself to it. I wonder if they felt that way in the Colonies at the start of the Revolution? But there were thirteen of them, and now there's only South Carolina by herself,

although I'm sure the other southern states will join us. But I felt sad and lonely, a little afraid, I don't know why. I prayed to God to protect our Commonwealth in all the days to come."

And as she was standing there under the stars, there came to Cordelia suddenly—someone must have thought of doing it on the spur of the moment—above the echoes from the streets the sound of bells; familiar, cherished, beloved bells; the historic, ancient bells of St. Michael's, chiming out *Auld Lang Syne.*

> "Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
> And never brought to mind?
> Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
> And days of auld lang syne?"

And Cordelia thought of all the past; of her childhood, of remembered days and places, of all the intervening years, and of Preston Baimbridge. For a while her cheeks were warm with tears.

And suddenly Preston Baimbridge stood before her.

6

Cordelia had not seen him for two years, not since that November afternoon at Penmarch, and suddenly, unaccountably, incredibly, there he stood beside her in the garden, under that clangor of ancient bells. Auld Lang Syne.

"Preston!"

"Cordelia . . ."

He had used the little side gate, as he had been accustomed to do in the old days when he came to see Giles. And to examine Mr. Audubon's books. He looked well, a little thinner than before, Cordelia noticed, but tanned and more than ever erect.

"I've just arrived in Charleston," he explained. "Not an hour ago. I won't keep you a minute, but I felt that I must come right away and thank you."

Thank her? Cordelia had no idea what he meant. It was not likely that he was referring to the Penmarch business.

"Yes," he maintained. "My father has told me about the affair in front of St. Andrew's. He told me what you did there. It was very

fine of you, Cordelia. I wanted to tell you how much I appreciated it. My father ought not to have gone out this evening at all. If I had been there in time I would have insisted on his staying at home."

"Well, why weren't you there?" Cordelia challenged him. "Where have you been all this time? Why did you never come back until now? You've been very much missed, Preston!"

He stood before her in the middle of the path, avoiding her eyes, answering her questions. He had joined the William Walker expedition of December, 1858, to Honduras. The one which had been wrecked on the Honduras coast and the survivors brought home by the British warship *Basilisk*. He had not used his own name; that was why no one had recognized him on the lists. He had been in Mexico after that, and in the August just passed he had gone again with Mr. Walker on his last fatal filibuster to Trujillo. Preston and some of his companions had made their way to Panama after the flight from Trujillo; William Walker, as Cordelia probably knew, had

surrendered to the English, who had handed him back to the Honduran Government and a firing squad.

"But why, why, why?" Cordelia complained, dismissing his not insignificant recital of perils and escapes. "Why didn't you send some word? Why didn't you come back? Why did you wait all this long time? What possessed you, Preston?"

"I couldn't stay in Charleston after what had happened," he explained, and just for a second he raised his head and looked her straight in the eyes. "I couldn't bear to. I didn't want to see anyone that I had ever known before, do you understand—not anyone. And I couldn't come back—I didn't think I'd ever come back. I can't ever forget what took place at Penmarch. It's on my conscience for the rest of my days." Perhaps Preston said more than that; one has only Cordelia's report of his utterances, and a paraphrase of her replies.

"Oh, your precious conscience!" she cried. "You're proud as Lucifer, that's all. You're so proud you couldn't bear to be forgiven.

There were only the four of us who knew about it, and my two brothers bore you no ill will. You've known that, surely. And you knew that afternoon at Penmarch, didn't you, that it wouldn't make any difference with me?"

"I know that you were very generous," he replied.

"Was that all?" she asked him.

"Good God, Cordelia!" Preston exclaimed. "I'm a murderer! I tried to murder your brother. I wonder you stand there and talk to me. I don't know how I ever had the effrontery to come here this evening. His blood is on my hands, just exactly as if I'd killed him."

"Oh, that's not true, that's not true!" she insisted. "It was all a dreadful sort of madness, that's all. You didn't mean to do it, and you didn't do it. Nothing happened, Preston, nothing at all."

"Only because you prevented me," he reminded her. "I'd have shot him if it hadn't been for that. Of course I would have killed myself."

Cordelia told him to hush.

"Why are you so obstinate?" she rebuked him. "The past is over and done with. No harm has come of it—no harm to Steeny, I mean, since you've got him so on your conscience. Don't stand there staring at your shoes, look at me!"

"Yes, Cordelia?"

"Are we always to stay in the past? Isn't there to be any future? Don't you understand?"

"What, Cordelia?"

"Well, why shouldn't I tell you! Don't you understand that I love you?"

"Cordelia!" his cry went ringing through the garden . . .

7

The outspoken Cordelia. Throughout her life, there was never in her the slightest fear of words. As for Preston, they always troubled him, and came heavily on his tongue. And these words of hers seem to have terrified him. The severe, conscience-stricken Preston.

"When—when—" he stammered.

"Always," she told him.

"Before—"

"Yes."

"And—and after?"

"Yes, yes, yes!" she convinced him. "Before, and after, and always. Now."

"That's horrible!" he exclaimed. "That you should say that to me."

"Then why did you come here this evening!" she asked him.

"Then you knew?" Preston began to talk very quickly, with that catch in his voice which she had so seldom heard. "How could you have known? I've been very unhappy, Cordelia. I used to think that I could never forget Sally, just as I can never forget your brother and all that horrible business. When I look at you now, I still see him. But I don't see Sally any more. I haven't thought of Sally for ages. Oh, why did you make me tell you this?"

"Because it's time we began to behave like human beings," Cordelia smiled. "Say what you have to say, Preston. What you came to say!"

"I didn't!" he was still trying to defend him-

self. "I didn't come to say anything, except to thank you for your kindness to my father. I didn't come to tell you anything. I'm not in love with you, Cordelia, do you hear?"

She laughed at him, all bells and trumpets, and before she had stopped he spoke again.

"Of course that's not true," he said. "That's simply not true. I am. I've known it for a long time now." Those, finally, were his own excellent words . . .

They rise, smiling like a song, from the page of Cordelia's diary on which she inscribed them late that night. The words so long awaited, so hopelessly despaired of. One comes to the place, and one imagines them there in the shadowy old garden; Cordelia and Preston, face to face at last with only the truth between them, the nightmare of Penmarch swept away, and starlight in their eyes. One reads a little further, to see him smash through his restraint, and crush out of existence the little space now separating them, and be done with it.

But no; he did no such thing; he simply stood there frowning, without a gesture.

"This is madness, too," he kept repeating.

"I ought never to have told you—" and Cordelia blazed her sudden anger at him.

"My stars, Preston Baimbridge!" she cried. "Make up your mind, can't you! What's the matter with you now, I'd like to know? You're the most incomprehensible man I ever saw."

"But don't you see how impossible it is?" he asked her. "The Penmarch thing—all right, that's between us and your brothers; if we think we can forget it, if we can be sure it wouldn't always spring up and be there before us, it's no concern of anyone but ourselves. But I couldn't ask you to marry me now, even if Penmarch had never happened. It wouldn't be fair to you. There's something else between us now."

What did he mean? Cordelia forgot her quick anger at him in her surprise at these later words. Preston put out his hand and touched something on her shawl, the blue cockade pinned above her heart.

"There is that," he reminded her. "Everything that happened in St. Andrew's Hall today. Don't you realize what it means, Cor-

delia? My father is right—you have destroyed the Union, and the North will never allow that. There will certainly be war before this thing is over."

"Oh, what nonsense!" Cordelia insisted. "That would be absurd. And if there is, supposing for a single moment that you are right, how can that alter the fact—"

"No, Cordelia," Preston interrupted her. "I know what you're going to say. I won't do it. I'm a Northerner, my whole family comes from the North, you yourself heard my father tonight. If it comes to trouble, the name of Baimbridge will be hated here. I can't ask you to take that name now. All your friends, perhaps your own family, all this town of which you are so essentially a part, would turn against you."

"And do you suppose I'd care?" she objected.

"No, of course not," he replied. "But it would be wrong of me to let you."

There, one has him more accurately, perhaps, in that sentence than in any other glimpse of him that has come down. Cordelia

seems to have understood at once that it was useless to try and move him from his scrupulous determination. And he was right, she did not deny it, in his wretched, blind, desperately honorable masculine way. For him to act otherwise would have required in him a quality of spirit, an indifference to codes, which were not a portion of man's inheritance. It was like Steeny, that day at Penmarch, persisting in having his duel. If she were to persuade Preston against his will he would only despise himself afterwards, and hate her for it. And so Cordelia simply smiled.

"Well, my dear," she remarked, "what's going to become of us?"

"I'm going north right away," he informed her. "If there's war—well, my dear, I can't take your blue cockade. When it's all over—oh, what's the use!" he broke off suddenly. "I'd better go now, hadn't I?"

"Yes, I suppose so," she did not attempt to detain him. "When it's all over—well, you'll kiss me goodbye, Preston?"

And the blue cockade on her shawl does not appear to have interfered . . .

He was gone, and she let him go quite confidently, almost gaily. There are no misgivings in her diary, no forebodings, only the manifestations of her rejoicing. Preston had returned, and the night was made brilliant. He had spoken those very excellent words to her. As for his other words, Cordelia was inclined to laugh at him a little. War—how could there be war? He would be back in Charleston soon. Before the spring . . .

8

The weeks passed, and still Cordelia would not admit the possibility of hostilities. To be sure, there was the dispute over Fort Sumter, but Major Anderson would be sent back to Moultrie; nothing serious would happen.

It was a slight enough incident which suddenly changed her mind. The singing of a song in a theatre. It was in March, 1861, and Cordelia was at New Orleans, visiting some of her French cousins. And one evening she was at the theatre to see a performance of *Pocahontas.* There was a march of Zouaves in the last scene, led by Miss Susan Denin singing

a song. A new song, written not long before by Dan Emmett as a "walk around" for Bryant's Minstrels in New York. A song called *Dixie.*

"In Dixie's land we'll take our stand,
To live and die in Dixie,
Away, away, away down South in Dixie . . ."

One only needs to remember the enduringly impetuous, irresistible quality of the famous minstrel tune, to picture the brilliant finale of the play that night, with Miss Denin stepping out into the clamor of a crashing orchestra with the tramping Zouaves behind her, in order to understand what happened. The roaring, cheering audience, up on their seats most of them, in a cyclone of applause, asking for the song again and again, streaming out of the theatre afterwards to send it sweeping through the South.

"I'm afraid," Cordelia admitted. "For the first time I'm afraid. It came to me while they were singing tonight. Songs can do so much harm, and that song will set us marching.

I never realized it before, but it's there just under the surface, the thing that makes wars, and it only takes a minstrel tune sometimes to bring it out."

And if the song set them marching, Preston would not so soon be back in Charleston. He might never be back. Something told her that he would give no sign, he would not write. He would simply be gone as long as men were marching, and when it was all over he might not be there to return.

"Is it all to be gone through again?" she wrote. "Is there always to be something between us?"

## CHAPTER III

### THE MESSENGER

### 1

CORDELIA returned to Charleston on April 11, and met her grandmother just getting into her carriage to go to the East Battery.

"They tell me General Beauregard is taking Sumter this afternoon," Suzanne informed her. "I wish to witness the event."

So it had come already. In spite of the promises to the contrary repeatedly made to the Confederate commissioners at Washington, a Federal fleet with reinforcements for Sumter was approaching, and General Beauregard had been instructed to demand the evacuation of the fort. The request had been re-

fused and the bombardment was expected to begin at any moment.

"It's war," Cordelia wrote afterwards. "There is to be blood after all between Preston and me."

She accompanied her grandmother to the Battery, and for hours they waited in the midst of a great throng come to see the downfall of Major Anderson. But nothing happened, and they finally went home. It was only between four and five in the morning of April 12 that Fort Johnson fired the opening gun, followed by Moultrie and the Point, Iron and Trapier batteries on Point Comings. Suzanne Chantrell was out of bed and insisting on getting dressed before the first echoes had died away, and nothing that Cordelia had to say could prevent her from going to watch the bombardment.

"You don't suppose I'm going to miss an occasion like this at my age!" Suzanne exclaimed.

And so they went back to the Battery and found the whole town there, every window jammed and the roof tops crowded with peo-

ple cheering and clapping the telling shots. Sumter began to reply at seven o'clock, and all day the thing went on; all day and well into the night, while the rain came down in torrents. But at midnight the crowds were still there—Suzanne had reluctantly consented to be taken home late in the afternoon after sitting all day in a window—observing the bursting bombs, and the flickering lights on the bar where men in rowboats were watching the Federal fleet which had arrived.

And on the following morning, April 13, Sumter was on fire; every time the Federal batteries replied the Confederate gunners cheered them for their pluck; the standard had fallen two or three times; and finally a little after one o'clock in the afternoon, Major Anderson surrendered. He was to have the honors of war and the privilege of saluting his flag with fifty guns. In Charleston all the bells were ringing and couriers were galloping through the streets.

"I ought to be glad," Cordelia wrote, "but I hate it. Those terrible bells, will they never stop! No, and this thing will never stop now.

If Preston ever does come back, who knows—there may be so much between us that we won't dare to speak to each other any more. Sumter, Moultrie, after all did it really matter so much!"

And of course Suzanne had to be taken across the harbor the next afternoon to see the evacuation ceremonies along with the rest of Charleston in "its best bib and tucker." And the sun shone, and the guns boomed, and the ships were fluttering with bunting; and at half past four the palmetto flag was raised and with it the new Stars and Bars which General Beauregard decided was "beginning to look well."

## 2

And now it was war. Mr. Lincoln had issued a call for seventy-five thousand volunteers; Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas had joined the Confederacy.

And not the short, inconsequential war which most people were predicting. Cordelia never believed that. Just a few battles, they were

saying, and England would recognize the Confederate States because of "King Cotton."

> "Old Cotton is King, boys, ha ha!
> With his locks so massive and white,
> He shines among kings like a star,
> And his is the scepter of right . . ."

What rubbish! Another fool song. And this nonsense about the Yankees not fighting because they were too busy making money. Even General Beauregard had called them "an armed rabble."

No, Cordelia knew that it would be a grim struggle, perhaps a bitterly long one, with destruction the only alternative to victory for the South. She had not believed at first that there would be war at all, but now that it had come she did not deceive herself. And as for the Yankees, one had only to read their papers to realize their attitude.

The South must be conquered, subjugated. Very well, the South must defend itself, repel this harsh invader; but it must stand solid and undismayed. No silly talk, no stupid illusions, no discord. For Cordelia herself, no

thoughts of Preston—repel this dear invader too, with all her strength—no moping, no self-pity. Courage and fortitude.

"Make us victorious, happy and glorious,
Spread Thy shield over us,
God save the South!"

If there must be a song, that was a better one. . . .

3

There was certainly very little talk in the Chantrell family. Only an immediate adaptation of life to the necessities of the time, a complete dedication of thought and energy to the demands of the cause.

Suzanne, and Cordelia, and Lucinda began to sew. Shirts and trousers, shirts and trousers, shirts and trousers; all day and every day, until their thimbles were become a permanent adornment, the act of threading a needle an unconscious, almost physiological process. Giles had volunteered at once with the Charleston Battalion, but Mr. Mallory and Mr. Memminger, the Secretaries of the Confeder-

ate Navy and Treasury, had sent him back to his desk. For the time being he would be rendering his most valuable service in organizing the port of Charleston as a cotton exporting base, in cooperating with Mr. Frazer and Mr. Trenholm in the creation of a Confederate merchant marine, and in the acquisition abroad of vessels to be added to the Confederacy's belligerent navy.

The firm name was again Chantrell and Chantrell, Giles and Captain Steeny—Charles Baimbridge had retired some time before, so that there were no disagreeable complications to be faced in that quarter—and the entire Chantrell fleet, as fast as the ships came in from their distant voyages, was placed at the disposal of the Montgomery, and later the Richmond government. The "Dixie Fleet" they called it along the southern waterfronts, and for a while the Chantrell house flag, a white *fleur de lys* on a blue field, was considered equivalent to the national emblem.

But from the very beginning there was one Chantrell ship at least which flew the naval Stars and Bars, the flag they changed later to

a blue cross with white stars on a white field. And that was the *Cordelia Belle*. Steeny came sweeping into Charleston with her from China just after the fall of Sumter, and proceeded to make life a misery for Giles until he persuaded Mr. Mallory to give Steeny his commission.

Steeny was a tremendous fellow these days, "with brass lungs and a face of copper," a recklessly successful driver of ships, a living terror and at the same time a sort of marine divinity to his crews, the toast of two oceans and known from Hong Kong to Liverpool, around both Capes, as "Buck" Chantrell. In the house he was a perpetual gale of wind, rollicking around his grandmother who treated him exactly as though he were still the spoiled lad of his boyhood; and pestering his sister-in-law Lucinda who pretended to be mortally afraid of him.

Towards Cordelia alone did he exhibit that sensitiveness which his sojourn at sea had buried under the brine of countless tempests. They had seen each other only very seldom since the Penmarch affair, and never had the right mood found them together for any ade-

quate discussion of the old events at Penmarch. But now in these opening days of the war, before his departure upon perilous enterprises, Cordelia could see that he wanted to tell her something; something which had often come to him, perhaps, in the long Pacific watches, and for which the words were difficult to choose.

They were talking about Sally and Royal; what would Sally do in the present emergency; and it seemed that Sally was coming back to Charleston with the child. Steeny had stopped at Nassau on this same voyage, and the matter had been settled then. Sally wanted to be back in her own native place, among all her own people, to share with them whatever the future might have in store. It was right for her to stand with her two families, Penmarch and Chantrell, and not isolate herself from them at such a time in the easy security of Nassau.

"You know," Steeny said suddenly, "there's something I've wanted to say to you all this time. I never could find the words. I'm terribly sorry, Cordelia!"

Yes? Well, it couldn't be helped. Cordelia knew right away what he meant.

"It's such a pity," Steeny went on. "I got what I wanted, it all turned out well for me, but you came out at the little end of the horn. But I had to let him challenge me if he wanted to. You understood that, didn't you?"

Yes, Cordelia had understood. Steeny mustn't worry.

"It was such an impossible situation for all of us after we'd gotten ourselves into it," he explained. "Of course I never dreamed he'd shoot at me that way."

"Please don't," Cordelia begged him. "It's all over now." She did not tell Steeny that she had seen Preston again, that one time in the garden.

"How splendid you were that afternoon at Penmarch!" Steeny exclaimed.

"Oh, I've often been quite splendid since then!" she assured him.

Steeny came and put his hands on her shoulders.

"You've always loved him, haven't you?" he asked her.

"Yes," she replied. "I always have. Do you mind?"

"No, of course not," he smiled at her. "That's what I've always wanted to tell you."

He sailed very soon after, in C. S. S. *Cordelia Belle.*

4

The months passed. Manassas was fought and won, and hopes for a speedy victory ran higher than ever. November came, and the taking of the Confederate commissioners Mason and Slidell off the English steamer *Trent* by the Federal sloop of war *San Jacinto* seemed to forecast a formal British protest against the northern blockade, but the North apologized and gave up the envoys.

"That was a blow for us," Cordelia admitted. "It would have been much better if the North had refused, as then England would certainly have acted against the Federal government. Now we have our envoys, but England is still neutral."

And all through 1862, more disasters. Fearful battles, Nashville fallen, New Orleans

taken—Port Royal already in Federal hands —but the Confederate raiders were doing well on the seas, the *Florida,* the *Alabama,* the *Cordelia Belle,* the ships the North had angrily dubbed the "damnpirates"; and in July General Lee had driven General McClellan away from Richmond. And in the autumn Charleston was very festive, with parties of young ladies going over to Sumter in the evenings to dance with the young gentlemen of the First South Carolina Artillery on the parade ground, and the courageous gaiety of the great Beauregard Ball, where every gentleman was in uniform and every lady danced with a smile on her lips. Suzanne Chantrell was there, and danced a part of every number. She was sixty-three years old.

"My grandmother simply refuses to miss anything, from balls to bombardments!" Cordelia recorded.

And in a few months, while the fatal shadow of Vicksburg and Gettysburg was darkening the South, Suzanne was to have her fill of bombardments. For after Admiral Du Pont's naval attack on Charleston, in April, 1863, had

failed, General Gillmore and the Federal land forces took a hand. All through June and July, and into August, with rumors of every description floating through the city.

"They say he has enormous guns," Suzanne wrote, "and Greek Fire. And what not."

The "and what not" is rather splendid, typical of that great lady's undismayed attitude. But the Federals were extremely busy night after night, contriving something in the marsh mud between James and Morris Islands, and at half past one on the morning of August 22 a three hundred pound shell from a gigantic 8-inch Parrott rifle burst in the residential section. Twelve of them fell effectively, and on the thirty-sixth discharge the gun blew up.

"Serves them right," Suzanne crowed. "Their old Swamp Angel! What a shameful thing to do. There seem to be so few gentlemen on the northern side. And it didn't accomplish anything except frighten our turkey buzzards. Hardly anyone was hurt, in fact almost no one went out. I simply put on one of my good dresses in case something should

happen to me, and sat in the parlor with all the lights lit, reading Augusta Evans's *Beulah.*"

An altogether admirable procedure, surely, in the presence of such a visitation of "the most destructive missiles ever used in war," fired "into the midst of a city taken unawares, and filled with sleeping women and children," as General Beauregard took pains to point out to General Gillmore.

And then in late August and September they were at it again, attacking Forts Sumter and Wagner, until the latter had to be evacuated after a continuous bombardment of two days and nights. Shells were falling in the city once more, around the Post Office, and the Market, and St. Michael's, but one is no longer surprised to find Suzanne at her post in a window on the Battery, watching the uproar along with everybody else—Parrott rifles, and siege guns, and coehorn mortars, pounding away in a glare of calcium flares.

"Wagner has fallen," she noted, "but they sha'n't have Sumter. They sha'n't! They *sh'a'nt!*"

And they didn't. The Charleston Battalion relieved Colonel Rhett's artillery—the armament of Sumter was now useless—and twice the Federals attacked, with iron-clads, and monitors, and troops, but the fort held out. In her diary Suzanne pasted a clipping from a Philadelphia paper of a subsequent date.

"How often has Fort Sumter been taken?" it cried ironically, and spitefully. "How many times has Charleston been burned? How many times has the famous Greek Fire poured the rain of Sodom and the flames of hell upon the secession city?"

"Who is the man, tell me if you can, who shot Billy Patterson?" Suzanne scribbled under it, quoting the current catch phrase in the South.

5

But Cordelia was not in Charleston when all these events took place. From November of 1862 on, one finds her less and less regularly in her native city, more and more frequently absent on prolonged journeys of which she has left only the most inadequate records in her

journal. For long stretches at a time there are no entries whatever in the diary, especially during the summer of 1863 and the first six months of 1864; and it is only from fragmentary references that one is able to ascertain the nature of her activities during that period.

From Suzanne's daily notations one learns nothing, except that Cordelia was away a great deal of the while, "gallivanting about like Lola Montez," for the Chantrell family was always the last to investigate Cordelia's movements. She came and she went; if she chose to explain her arrivals and departures, well and good, if not, no one ever attempted to question them. Cordelia was her own mistress; in her middle twenties now, vigorous and active, constantly in the saddle, alert and able-bodied, her features moulded by maturity into an even more richly furnished beauty of contrasting ivory and jet which was to endure all her days; in the family it was pretty well understood now that Cordelia had passed through a great personal trouble, and must be left alone to find her own compensations in life.

And what was she doing, the strange Cordelia, all during those months in which she never mentioned Preston? Months in which she occasionally speaks entertainingly of Richmond—she was in Richmond a great deal—of Thursday evening "hops" at the Spotswood Hotel, of little private dances and charades in the homes of the members of that elegant and spirited "Starvation Club," of receptions at Mrs. Davis's "White House," of makeshift dishes, and clothes, and books printed on wall paper; but always in a manner which leaves one looking between the lines for some further revelation of her real pursuits, of the actual business which took her so often into the private offices of Mr. Mallory, and Mr. Seddon, and Mr. Benjamin, at the Navy, War and State Departments.

Well, it is quite simple; just what one might have expected of her, something mysterious and arduous. Something to occupy her mind. Cordelia was a spy—there seems to be no finer word—perhaps the greatest of all the Confederate spies, for she was that anonymous and almost legendary lady known throughout the

archives of the secret service as The Messenger.

"The Messenger passed through your lines without the least difficulty, as usual, at a quarter after five this morning."

One of the customary missives which the Messenger was in the habit of sending to the crestfallen commanders of Federal units whose watchfulness she had evaded, and which came to light long afterwards, in Cordelia's own handwriting, to be published for the first time in this volume and establish her identification; otherwise it would perhaps never have been known, not that she was a spy, for she admitted that in her journal, but that she and the Messenger were one. There were three great mysteries that survived the Civil War: the mission which had been entrusted to those three Confederate officers, captured within the Federal lines with considerable sums of gold on their persons, and who went to the firing squad without revealing their destination; the fate of the lost Great Seal of the Confederacy; and the identity of the celebrated Messenger. And of these, one at least is finally revealed in the person of Cordelia Chantrell.

6

Beyond that fact, it is little enough that one learns from her. Mr. Davis had heard of her, he had sent for her, and proposed that he entrust to her certain secret and important missions, and she had accepted. That was in November, 1862.

"I am to be a spy," she wrote. "It seems to be all a woman can do except sew. They want me to go between Richmond and Washington gathering information and carrying messages, and there will be other things. If I'm captured I suppose they'll shut me up somewhere. They only shoot the men. The only time a spy is a hero is when he gets shot, and women can't even do that."

Indeed, Cordelia does not say so, but it would almost appear as though officers on both sides had gone out of their way frequently to make themselves agreeable to the various female spies who insisted on intruding upon their affairs. The careers of Miss Belle Boyd, of Miss Virginia Moon, of The Woman on Horseback—as the Federals called the Messenger towards the end—are filled with in-

stances of almost too susceptible lieutenants, of hospitable colonels and complaisant generals who witnessed their goings and comings with a guilelessness which begins to suggest deliberate indifference, and who, when pushed to the extreme of detaining them, surrounded them with all the chivalrous amenities of an exceedingly tenuous captivity.

The fact was that a lady was always a lady, to be treated with courtesy and tolerance. Ladies, although caught red-handed with maps in the soles of their shoes—the metaphor becomes slightly confused—could not be shot, nor must they be clapped into the casemates of Libby or Andersonville. Cordelia was always perfectly conscious of this, disdainful of the peril of her employment, unimpressed by any notion of personal heroism, concerned only in the performance of her task.

"I know what I'm doing is important," she summed it up. "Aside from that, allowing for a stray bullet crossing the lines, I run no risks whatever except of being found out and losing my despatches, or being made a fool of by some Yank."

Of course, there was always the possibility of that stray bullet. . . .

For the rest, one can only consult the folklore of the Messenger. Passing back and forth on horseback and in every sort of conveyance, always remembering to send the provoking little notes; never taken, of course, never suspected; dining at Yankee headquarters and picking up supposedly carefully guarded information; drawing the most innocent sketches of landscapes and flowers in a code readily convertible into outposts and batteries; never appearing twice in the same place as long as the same troops were in possession; taking a broken down Yankee despatch bearer into her carriage once, and driving him smack into the hands of a Confederate patrol while she seesawed dramatically at the reins of a pair of apparently runaway horses; setting two Yankee infantry regiments to shooting at each other all one night by the bland process of galloping past their sentries crying that the Rebels were coming, a variation of Paul Revere much appreciated around Confederate camp fires.

One exploit after another—many of them fabricated, no doubt, in the popular imagination—but the modest sentence about the stray bullet crossing the lines takes on a very definite and acute significance. There was evidently nothing timid, nothing commonplace about the Messenger. Only a very high courage, seasoned with an excellent sense of humor.

The magnificent Cordelia. . . .

## 7

They sent for her, finally, during the summer of 1864, to submit to her an enterprise of a somewhat different nature. Mr. Burton Harrison ushered her into Mr. Davis's office, and Mr. Mallory and Mr. Seddon were there, and also Mr. Trenholm, of the great Charleston firm of Frazer and Trenholm, who had recently replaced Mr. Memminger as Secretary of the Treasury. They wanted her to run the blockade, presumably from Charleston, and go to Nassau, in the Bahamas. There she was to endeavor to discover the identity of the Federal agent who, it was their conviction, was sending out intelligence concerning the blockade run-

ners to the Federal fleet in those waters. There was a constant leakage of information of a most damaging character from the Cotton Bureau at Nassau, and it must be that someone in very close touch with affairs down there was in the pay of the Federal government; unless someone in the Cotton Bureau was actually an operative of the secret service, sent there from the office of the Federal Provost in Washington.

"They suspect a man called Godfrey Loring," Cordelia recorded, "and another called Richard Morgan. Loring is an Englishman who came to Nassau not long ago from Honduras, and Morgan seems to be a Southerner. One of them is probably the Federal agent in question, although it may of course be someone entirely different. That's what they want me to find out—who shot Billy Patterson, so to speak!"

The Confederate naval situation was of course extremely precarious. Of the raiders, the *Shenandoah* and the *Florida*—but only for a few months more—and the *Cordelia Belle* were still at large, doing a considerable damage

to northern shipping, everywhere from Singapore to Valparaiso; but the *Georgia* was out of commission, the old *Sumter* had been abandoned at Gibraltar more than a year before, and the precious *Alabama* had just been destroyed off Cherbourg by U. S. S. *Kearsarge*. The entire southern coast was blockaded by Federal fleets.

On the other hand the blockade runners from Nassau and Bermuda were thriving; long, narrow, shallow draught, side-wheel steamers mostly, painted grey or black, using good, smokeless Welch coal; built to carry anywhere up to twelve hundred bales of cotton pressed down, slipping in and out of Charleston and Wilmington, and out past Hog cleared "for Havana and a market"—for Nassau was neutral after all, and there was a United States Consul reporting on all this commotion—with their lights extinguished, and their engine room hatches and binnacles covered with tarpaulins.

Steamers of the Crenshaw and Collie lines, of the Frazer and Trenholm, and Chantrell and Chantrell companies, "white-washed" Ameri-

can vessels flying convenient, and often only temporary neutral flags; ships that cost perhaps thirty thousand pounds to build, some five thousand including commissions and bounties to finance for one round voyage—Nassau and Charleston every seven days—and which netted maybe sixty thousands pounds on every trip, bringing out ten cents a pound Charleston cotton worth a dollar and more on the Nassau wharves, and taking in blankets, and shoes, and army cloth, medicines, soap and tea, and all the hundred and one articles, down to ladies' corsets, which Major Caleb Huse and Mr. Prioleau were purchasing abroad for the Confederate States.

"Vessels like the *Kate* and the *Herald* have brought out more than two million dollars' worth of cotton," Cordelia was told. "They pay for themselves in two voyages, even if they're captured on the third. And a lot of the stuff that's smuggled in through the blockade actually comes from the North, even arms and ammunition. But I reckon some of our own cotton brokers are no better, sending out bales which they know are intended for the North.

What shameful things men will do when there's money to be made."

8

Of course secrecy regarding the movements in and out of Nassau of these blockade runners was essential if they were successfully to avoid the Federal squadron cruising off the Northeast Providence Channel. And now it seemed that advance notice of their sailing was all the time being sent out, so that repeatedly no sooner were they abreast of Abaco Light than already they found a brace of Yankees after them, following them to the open sea. And this was what Cordelia was to investigate, and put an end to if possible.

"Do anything you please," Mr. Seddon told her, "say anything you like—Mr. Mallory will give you all the credentials you may require, so that all Confederate acting masters will be under your orders—but catch that Federal agent."

Cordelia fortified herself with a reprinted copy of "Lee's miserables," as they were calling Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables,* and another

of the new *Macaria, or Altars of Sacrifice,* by the author of *Beulah,* and went home to Charleston. To a city in which all business and social activity was now concentrated in a few squares above Calhoun Street, because of the constant shelling which had rendered the lower part of town unsafe, an almost deserted region where grass was growing knee-high in the débris and glass strewn streets, and partly demolished mansions stood gaunt and lonely in the midst of unkempt gardens gone to seed.

"Our poor neglected gardens," Cordelia wrote, "that we were so proud of. The city has been terribly hurt, but Sumter still holds out. They'll never take Charleston by force, and the ships are still sailing. The wharves are jammed with cotton."

And Grandmother Suzanne had not stirred from her home—in fact the range was lengthening these days, and people were beginning to move back downtown, leaving the shells to go by overhead. They were all delighted to see Cordelia, if only for a few days. Giles looked pale and thin, worn out with his work, but he

found cheerful words for her, and the promise of an early passage in the swiftest vessel available. They had heard not long before from Steeny, an old letter mailed months ago in Callao and run through the blockade. Mrs. Baimbridge had died only very recently and Charles Baimbridge never was seen any more, he kept to himself and people let him alone. Sally was at Penmarch with her mother. No one in Cordelia's circle, of course, had anything to tell her concerning Preston. They did not even suspect that she had seen him that evening in 1860.

Three nights later she sailed, in the *Palmetto,* down the Ship Channel, and across the bar, and out through the lumbering Yankee fleet. A perfectly uneventful journey, according to her, and some fifty-two hours later they were off Little Treasure Cay and something caught Cordelia's roving eye. Something in the lagoon behind the cay.

"Look," she said to the master of the *Palmetto.* "Did you ever see cocoanut leaves and banana leaves growing on the same trees?"

The master of the *Palmetto* had never viewed such a phenomenon before, but what annoyed him was that he should not have been the first to observe it.

"Give me the blind man's dog!" he cried. "You have eyes, ma'am."

It was obviously a ship, the masts of a ship unintelligently disguised with leaves, hidden in the lagoon. A Federal bird of prey, no doubt, waiting to carry messages to the fleet. Something to do with the Federal agent? Cordelia instructed the master to say nothing about it in Nassau.

"But what do you make of it, ma'am?" he enquired, with a suddenly developed deference which entertained Cordelia enormously.

"Who shot Billy Patterson?" she laughed at him. "But just the same," she added afterwards in her account of the episode, "that's one score for me. He probably signals somewhere, and they relay it out. We're going to have fun."

They went in past Hog, into the crowded, sparkling waters of Nassau harbor, with the crew at the rail singing—

"We are a band of brothers, and native to the soil,
Fighting for our liberty with treasure, blood and toil,
And when our rights were threatened the cry rose near and far,
Hurrah for the Bonnie Blue Flag that bears a Single Star . . ."

# PART III

# DIXIE ISLAND

## 1864–1878

"We loved each other then, Lorena,
More than we ever dared to tell;
And what we might have been, Lorena,
Had but our lovings prospered well. . . ."

*Songs of the Civil War.*

# CHAPTER I

## THE FEDERAL AGENT

### 1

NASSAU, in the summer of 1864. Cordelia went ashore into the great commotion of that port which in little more than two years had seen the value of its commerce increase from less than five hundred thousand pounds to more than five million. Along the wharf where the gangs of half naked black stevedores were yo-heave-ho-ing to the tune of *Oh Jeff Davis is a gentleman,* drowning out the anchor chanty of a Liverpooler's crew—

"*Ride Lincoln on a rail*
*Until his coat is tore;*
Let's take him by the pantaloon,

**And turn him up like an old grey coon,**
**And chuck him high like a musharoon,**
**Upon a wooden rail!**
***Ride Lincoln on a rail***
***Until his back is sore . . .***"

Into the uproar of Bay Street, seething from Cumberland to Parliament. Negro women with baskets balanced on their heads rolling by to market; boarding house touts clamoring up trade—

"Champagne with every meal!"

Newly created millionaires, overnight magnates, soaring the bids for Virginia tobacco in front of the Vendue House; gamblers, adventurers and carpet-baggers elbowing each other before saloon shacks on the north side, gaily chalked with Stars and Bars; merchants in earnest groups under the notice boards of the business houses on the south side; runners, money sharks, patent medicine men, cotton brokers, shipping agents, grey clad Confederate acting masters and pilots, all surging up and down the riotous roadway, among the barrels, and cases, and bales stacked up at

the entrances of overflowing warehouses and shops; sailors, incoming crews, outgoing crews, champagne soaked after a night in the octagonal jail, bounty laden after a successful voyage, flinging gold pieces into the wine stained gutters, shouting, and quarreling, and singing—*There's Life in the Old Land Yet,* and *The Confederate Privateer*—

"Fighting bravely to the last,
From Abe's cruisers running fast,
Our flag is nailed upon the mast;
And ere this wanton war is past
We'll to the earth their commerce cast—
Then let each jolly tar
Huzza for the noble war;
Give three times three for Sumter now,
Whose flag shall ne'er to the tyrant bow!"

It made Cordelia a little angry, all this neutral prosperity and dissipation, all this carousing and racket.

"That's always the way," she wrote afterwards. "The further they are from the war, the louder they sing about it. It seems to

me they do nothing but sing in Nassau. Sing, and drink rum, and throw money out of the windows. At night the whole ridge, from Fort Fincastle to Charlotte, is a blaze of lights, and a continuous bedlam of banquets, and violins, and popping corks. Heaven knows where they all sleep—those that aren't in jail before morning!"

2

Cordelia had herself taken to the ridge, to the new, hundred thousand pound Royal Victoria Hotel at the head of Parliament and East Streets; the four storied, piazzaed hotel named for Her Gracious Neutral Majesty, and paid for out of the earnings of the least neutral of her ports for the purpose of providing adequate shelter and entertainment for her belligerent guests.

"You see the Confederate flag everywhere," Cordelia noted. "You hear nothing but Confederate songs, and the streets are filled with Confederate naval uniforms. Our people call Nassau 'Dixie Island.' Of course it's natural when you remember how many of the old fam-

ilies here like the Hamiltons came originally from South Carolina, after the Revolution."

And the first thing to do was to get in touch with the Penmarches' Hamilton cousins at Ashley House, for there more than anywhere else, Cordelia realized, opportunity would be given her to familiarize herself with Nassau ways and personalities. At Ashley House, the name of which put one in mind right away of Charleston, the fame of which had reached even the White House at Richmond.

On the ridge, to the west of Fort Charlotte, one of the oldest structures in Nassau. Some of its walls had been standing in 1667, when Captain Sayle had come ashore, hurricane driven, and renamed the island New Providence to commemorate his escape. Many of its windows had looked upon the various comings of the Spaniards, notably in 1680, when they had amused themselves by roasting the English Governor on a spit over a slow fire. Its cellars had furnished wine for the carousals of three generations of buccaneers, its threshold had echoed to the tread of Mor-



Anderson College

gan and Davis, Teach, Hornygold and Bonner.

The house had grown, a wing here, a coach house there, and the slave quarters spreading around the courtyard—until in 1783 it gleamed with candelabra to receive Lieutenant Colonel Deveaux of the Loyal Militia of the Province of South Carolina, who with fifty volunteers in two brigantines had raised His Majesty's standard once more over the island. A few months later the refugees from the Colonies were pouring into Nassau, purchased by the Crown from the Lords Proprietor for some fourteen thousand pounds as a haven for the American Loyalists. The mansion on the ridge had gone to the Hamiltons of Charleston, who named it Ashley in memory of their plantation on the old "seated river." A noble house, three storied and columned, reached by a sweeping driveway through imposing gates, surrounded by one of the most beautiful gardens in Nassau. A Charleston garden, the Hamiltons always insisted, filled with palms, sapodillas and paw-paws, resplendent with bougainvillier, poinsettia and double olean-

ders. A mysterious old house, with secret panels and closets, peopled with legends of buccaneer gold and Spanish massacres.

And now once again its portals were thrown open in wide hospitality, lights shone brilliantly from its triple tier of windows, high revelry awoke the echoes of its ancient chambers, its threshold strained under the tread of the new corsairs in grey. A South Carolinian home welcoming its kin from over the water. The doors of Ashley House were never closed, its kitchens clattered night and day, its long, silver laden table knew no idleness. Men came in the morning and were gone at night, and on the following morning others had filled their places. Sooner or later every acting master in the Confederate navy, every commander of a "whitewashed" vessel, every commissioner, privateer and purchasing agent passed through its portals.

"It is difficult to say," Mr. Mallory had informed Cordelia, "whether the Cotton Bureau is really located in Mr. Loring's office on Bay Street, or in the back parlor of Ashley House."

Themselves an old "refugee" family, the Hamiltons were considered "conchs" of the "conchs" as the result of frequent intermarriages with the original settler families, foremost on the privileged list at Government House, and South Carolinian to the core. While Bay Street swarmed, and fought, and caroused, in a reek of rum and decayed fruit in the midst of which men slept in the dirt of gutters spilling sovereigns from their bulging pockets—up at Ashley House they danced, and flirted, and dined in state; rising to decorous, champagne seasoned toasts; singing in swinging choruses with their faces turned to the starry blue cross upon its white field hanging on the wall at the head of the table.

It was there that Cordelia must establish herself.

3

Ashley was crowded when she arrived. The "conchs" dined at noon, and the parlors were lively with people just risen from the table. And immediately Cordelia fell into the common forgetful mistake, and looked for some

commanding figure presiding over the assemblage.

But that figure was lacking. Ashley Hamilton in his fifties had taken leave of the present, and lived only in the past. Men in grey came and went in his drawing rooms, he himself sat absorbed in his study fingering the dusty covers of books, studying the lore of the lost Lucayan Indian civilization, speculating upon the existence of primitive wild men in the forests of Andros Island—the dreaded "Yahoos" of Bahaman negro legend. To many who frequented his house, Ashley Hamilton was only a stranger who passed sometimes with stooping shoulders through their gatherings. And his wife, the beautiful Clorinda Rolle, had died many years before.

Young Royal Hamilton—the old name was common, it seems, in both the Penmarch and Hamilton families—a good looking young buck of eighteen, very English, had not stepped into his father's place. He worked in the Chantrell shipping office, was extremely popular at Government House garden parties, and was forever exclaiming "Oh my!"—the

constant "conch" expression which was so to annoy Cordelia. He was, however, to do her a difficult service.

But in the great arm chair under the starry flag at the head of the table, bowing to the compliment of outstretched glasses; on the steps of the wide mahogany staircase under the crystal chandelier; in the alcove near the piano listening gravely to whispered confidences; at the heels of her negro maids—the Clotilda Mahalas, and Malvina Daphnes, and Savelita Eulalias who filled the house with the mellifluous sound of their grandiloquent names—it was a girl that Cordelia was to see. A girl of seventeen only, in a white gown trimmed with blue, her black hair dressed in parted ringlets, a grey ribbon at her slender throat. A pale girl with flashing black eyes behind their sweeping fringe of lashes, and a smile to set you sighing. Cynthia Hamilton, the "Pearl of Nassau."

"She's taller, and more vivacious, but she's almost the spitten image of Sally Penmarch when she was a girl," Cordelia noticed . . .

Cordelia waited for Royal that afternoon,

and took him into the library. She must have someone to help her.

"Royal," she asked him, "can I trust you, if I tell you something very secret and very important?"

"Oh my!" Royal apparently said "Oh my!" a great many times during the course of that interview. At all events, he was obviously tremendously impressed by Cordelia, enormously flattered by her confidence in him, stirred by all manner of chivalrous impulses towards this beautiful lady who came from over the water bringing with her all the romantic glamour of that cause which was so constant a concern in his family. He could be trusted.

"Is there any way you could watch what goes on in the Cotton Bureau for a while?" she enquired.

There was something to be discovered, perhaps, in the Cotton Bureau itself, in the office of Godfrey Loring and Richard Morgan, on the ground floor of the old house on Bay Street. The room through which every blockade runner's master passed, every manifest and invoice, every last scrap of information

having to do with the cotton ships. A shipping office, ostensibly, where mates and pilots sat reading the notices of Mr. Holloway's miraculous patent medicines in the *Bahama Herald* while waiting to be paid their wages; actually a carefully organized department of the Confederate maritime enterprise.

Royal was startled, but he thought that he could find a way. Chantrell and Chantrell had a storeroom on the floor above the Cotton Bureau; it was hardly ever used, there were only old documents and ledgers there; he felt sure that he could manage peep holes to give him a view of the room below.

"What you have to do is very difficult," Cordelia reminded him. "You mustn't be seen or heard. You mustn't tell a soul. You see, it's not just the clerks in the Cotton Bureau; I want you to watch Mr. Loring and Mr. Morgan too—do you understand?"

"Oh my!" Yes, Royal was beginning to understand . . .

4

And that evening Cordelia saw them both, Mr. Loring and Mr. Morgan.

There was a party of people at Ashley, as usual, and more introductions for Cordelia, who Cynthia had insisted must remain at the house during her stay in Nassau. They made a great miration over her, this Miss Cordelia Chantrell of Charleston and Richmond—some of them were not entirely unaware of her services to the southern cause—crowding around her to meet her; and eventually Cordelia heard Cynthia at her elbow—

"Mr. Loring, of the Cotton Bureau."

A stout, little middle-aged Englishman, with blue eyes and light hair, what there was of it, very pleasant and well mannered. And while she was still talking to him, a man walked into the room, a big, well set up fellow with red hair. It was Preston Baimbridge.

"For a moment I thought I was going to faint," Cordelia wrote afterwards. "I wouldn't believe my eyes."

Preston Baimbridge . . .

"Who is that gentleman?" she heard herself asking Godfrey Loring.

"That is my assistant, Mr. Richard Morgan," he replied, and called to him to join them.

Richard Morgan . . .

There was no question on either side, apparently, of avoiding the meeting. Before he reached her, Cordelia held out her hand to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Morgan?" she greeted him, and waited to see what he would say.

For just a second he stared at her, and then he bowed over her hand while Godfrey Loring performed the amenities of this unnecessary presentation.

"I am honored to meet Miss Chantrell," Mr. Morgan remarked.

5

Richard Morgan was Preston Baimbridge, a northerner masquerading in Nassau. At no time does Cordelia appear to have blinded herself to the significance of that fact. That he was there in front of her was something which could still fill her soul with immeasurable joy; but that the fact of his presence must almost inevitably identify him as the Federal agent—this was a terrible discovery which poisoned the sources of her delight, imprison-

ing her in the frigid grasp of an absolutely paralyzing conviction.

"Out of all the scores of men it might have been, is it Preston Baimbridge that I've been sent here to find?" she put the question to herself quite frankly. "What am I going to do?"

They went out together, into the garden—yard, they called it—that first evening. They could not stand there forever staring at each other in front of Godfrey Loring in the crowded parlor; something had to be done, and Preston was always such a dumb nimshi, whose emotions choked him and bereft him of speech, except when he lost his head. When he lost his head he could speak fast enough, Cordelia remembered, and say the things which one would never have suspected in him. In the library at Penmarch he had done that, and for a few moments on that evening in Charleston. But not here at Ashley. No words came from him to express the bewilderment in his astonished eyes.

"I declare, it's very close in here," Cordelia suggested. "Shall we look for a breath of air in the garden, Mr. Morgan?"

He gave her his arm immediately, while Godfrey Loring bowed his smiling acknowledgment of his dismissal, and slowly they passed through the assemblage and out into the fragrant Bahaman night, punctuated with the innumerable stars of a tropical sky, restless with the inevitable echoes of negro singing. A hymn, lifting its melancholy cadences from the quarters where January Tabernacle Granville, and Solomon's Porch McDonald, and a collection of dusky Hepburns and Finlays were pitching riddles—"Ma riddle, ma riddle, ma rendiho, perhaps you can tell me dis riddle and perhaps you can't," Cordelia could hear them reciting the traditional doggerel. A mournful hymn, the words of which found anxious lodgment in her own heart.

"When I go down to de wood for to pray,
Ole Satan he say to me
You Jesus dead, and de Lord he gone away,
And he no hear you pray.
Oh Lord, remember me, oh Lord, remember me,
Remember me as de year roll round,
Oh Lord, remember me!"

There was a summer house on the lawn—one of those little columned, circular "temples of Love," surmounted by a statuette of the troublesome god—and it was there that their footsteps led them; in a grave silence which neither of them seemed willing to break.

"I simply couldn't speak to him," Cordelia wrote. "I wanted to say so many things, but there were always three of us there, Preston and I—and Richard Morgan!"

6

And that was it; she wanted to say so many things to him; he must have had so many things to say to her; but she could not speak a word. They could neither of them speak a word, in the fatal presence of Richard Morgan. They stood, dumbly, not daring to look at each other.

In the parlor, through the open windows, they could hear Cynthia singing *Lorena.*

"We loved each other then, Lorena,
More than we ever dared to tell;
And what we might have been, Lorena,
Had but our lovings prospered well . . ."

They both turned and listened to the music. It served as an excuse for their continued silence.

"But then, 'tis past, the years are gone,
I'll not call up their shadowy form;
I'll say to them Lost years, sleep on,
Sleep on, nor heed Life's pelting storm."

The music stopped, and the silence again assailed them with a suffocating discomfort. Cordelia remembered the thought which had come to her in Charleston, on the night Sumter had fallen.

"Who knows—there may be so much between us that we won't dare to speak to each other any more . . ."

Preston had nothing to say to her. No reassuring answer to the questions which she dared not put to him. No explanation of his pseudonym; the name, probably, under which he had served with William Walker. No justification of his sojourn in Nassau. Nothing. But it was fine of him not to complain, not to pretend, not to lie to her. Not to appeal to her in any way.

For just a second Cordelia touched him with her finger tips. For just a second he raised his troubled eyes. They looked at each other, mutely. Then quickly she turned, and let him follow her back to the house . . .

## 7

Two days later Royal came to Cordelia all agog with discovery. She had not seen Richard Morgan since the first evening. For two days she had been pondering her fantastic dilemma; putting off her evil hour, giving herself time in which to test her two conflicting loyalties, pretending that she must have proof. Hoping that Royal would not come so very soon. And here he was, all breathless, and he had seen Mr. Morgan going through Mr. Loring's desk; Mr. Morgan had wire keys to all the drawers, and he had examined everything, copying some of the papers. It had been during the noon hour.

"You saw Mr. Morgan doing that?" Cordelia made him repeat his story. "You're sure it was Mr. Morgan?"

Certainly, Royal was sure. So youthfully,

triumphantly sure. He knew Mr. Morgan when he saw him. You couldn't mistake that red hair. And now what were they going to do? Royal was all for immediate violence, naturally.

"I'll have to think," Cordelia told him. "We've got to catch him at it—don't say a word about this now, whatever you do!"

Not a word at Ashley, or anywhere. Royal had better watch Mr. Morgan in Nassau and try and find out where he was signalling from. That was the next thing to know. Mr. Morgan might not be the only person involved; they must try and catch them all if there were others. Mr. Morgan must be signalling from some place, communicating with someone. Fort Fincastle, the Queen's Staircase, Fort Charlotte, Clifton Point—Royal must find out where it was.

"You're such a smart boy!" *Damn him,* she let the angry words slip from her afterwards.

"Oh my!" Royal beamed. "Isn't it fun!"

Yes, it was great fun, Cordelia agreed with him. Great fun . . .

## CHAPTER II

### THE MAN WITH A CONSCIENCE

### 1

ONE comes to this point in the Chantrell Diary, and of course one speculates on Cordelia's solution of her impossible problem. One wonders whether she can have devised anything to reconcile her personal devotion and her public duty, whether she ever found her way to any decision whatever, or whether she deliberately sacrificed one of the two individuals represented by the Federal agent to the other. And if so, which one. But one would never foresee, surely, the first thing that she did.

She sent for Preston to come and see her. Would he come that afternoon to Ashley, and meet her in the summer house? She had some-

thing very important to say to him. He came, of course. What else could he do? He must have realized the peril to him of her unexpected presence in Nassau; but he must also have assumed the impossibility of any conventional betrayal at her hands. Cordelia would never set a trap for him. He must have been sure of that. She was waiting for him when he arrived, and entered at once upon her subject.

"Preston," she told him, "I have something to say to you. You may have wondered what I was doing here in Nassau. I want you to know that I hold a commission from President Davis in the Confederate secret service."

Preston never flicked an eyelash. He bowed to her, he made some normal exclamation of admiring surprise—but no slightest sign escaped him to show that her statement was of the least immediate concern to him.

"I was sent here," she went on, "to try and discover the identity of a Federal agent who has been operating in Nassau for some time past, sending out information about the blockade runners from the Cotton Bureau to the Federal fleet."

"Indeed!" Preston remained perfectly calm. "And you have succeeded?"

"Yes, I have," Cordelia looked him squarely in the eyes, but his never wavered. "I've found out enough now to convince me that I am right. I knew, of course, the minute I saw him, but I wanted to make sure. When I came here I didn't think my work would be made so terribly easy for me. Do you understand what a monstrous thing success can be sometimes? Almost anyone else would have had trouble finding this man, would have had an excuse for failure!"

Just the shadow of a smile twitched the corners of Preston's lips, and for the life of her Cordelia could not help answering it. Just for a second. What a courageous spirit he had, what a lively presence of mind, what a satisfactory perception of her own little subtleties. How fine an intercourse there would always have existed between them.

"I congratulate you, Cordelia," he remarked. "Are you going to tell me who it is?"

## 2

No, Cordelia had not intended to do that.

"I don't think it's necessary for me to tell you," she replied, and he was welcome to every meaning of which the sentence was capable. But he was not to escape the coals of fire. "I was surprised when I found out," she declared to him—and how grateful one is for her painstaking report of this conversation. "The man was born a northerner, and I can understand his siding with the North—every man to his own convictions. But then I would have expected him to fight, to come out openly in his true colors, not to take the meanest possible advantage of people who had been his friends and associates. Can you imagine a man choosing to be a spy?"

But she did not succeed in making him wince with her careful scorn, Cordelia had to admit that.

"Oh come, you're a spy yourself," he reminded her. "I daresay you've had friends and associates at the North that you're deceiving. There's too much nonsense talked

about spies. A spy is usually an extremely brave man, don't you think so?"

Yes, Cordelia could not contradict that.

"Now this man you're talking about," Preston was himself looking her squarely in the eyes and she could not deny him his defence. "You don't know what circumstances may have forced him into this work. You don't know how repugnant it may have been to him, or may"—he hesitated a second—"or may have become to him. Perhaps he was chosen to do it for the very reason that he was familiar with southern affairs. I expect he's simply doing what he conceived to be his duty, all personal considerations aside."

"Yes," Cordelia flung at him, "I expect that's just the kind of a man he is. Always doing what he conceives to be his duty, all personal considerations aside. That's the sort of man I could hate."

"I'm sure he would expect you to," Preston told her. "Why do you say the sort of man you could hate? Don't you hate him? It's your duty to hate him."

Oh, her duty—why, Cordelia asked him.

She had, she confessed afterwards, in some ways never admired him so much.

"Because he is an enemy," Preston insisted, and one must suppose that he intended a warning.

"One doesn't hate one's enemies," she assured him. "Not simply because they're enemies. Not even when they're spies. No, I don't hate him."

"My dear," the words seemed to escape him, "I shall never understand you."

3

"Well, what are we going to do about this man?" he enquired, after she had sat staring at her hands for a while. "I suppose you sent for me to tell me that?"

Preston was evidently willing to fall in with her tacitly impersonal mood. Cordelia took a long look at him; the counterpart of the look that she had given him in the library at Penmarch, that time when there had been an "accident." She was hoping that he would understand her intention.

"I thought perhaps you'd help me," she told

him. "I want that man to give up his work and leave Nassau. I'm ready to accept his parole, so to speak, until he can get a Yankee ship to take him north."

"You're asking a great deal," Preston objected, "if the man has any conscience!"

"I think I'm treating him rather generously," she retorted, for his admirable self-possession angered her a little.

"Yes, that's true," he agreed. "This man can have no claim on your forbearance. Whatever your previous experience of him, Cordelia, he has preferred to forfeit his privilege."

She realized suddenly why he had used those words. Preferred to forfeit his privilege. That was what Giles had remarked about him in the library at Penmarch. It seemed to Cordelia that Preston had just said a very delicate thing. That was perhaps his greatest characteristic, after all, a surpassing delicacy. He had wanted to make sure that she understood that he had absolved her from any loyalty towards him. As though it could be done with words.

"I think you were right," she smiled at him.

"There are certain things about me that you will never understand." She would have liked to find something more kindly to say to him, something more inspired for him to keep, but the precise utterance failed her. "Come," she shook her head, "let's get on with this. I want you to do something for me. I want you to go to the United States Consul, he undoubtedly knows this Federal agent"—would Preston understand her flimsy subterfuge—"and have him tell the agent what I have said and get his answer, so you can bring it to me tomorrow afternoon. Will you do that?"

"And if this Federal agent has a conscience, what then?" Preston challenged her frankly.

"I'm expecting his generosity to equal mine," she replied. "I could have him seized and put aboard one of our blockade runners, and taken to Charleston; or he might just be found some morning lying dead in a gutter in Nassau. These things happen, even on neutral territory. But I prefer to let him go, if he will agree to my terms."

"I don't imagine he would be afraid of dying!" Preston defied her.

"Oh no," Cordelia agreed with him. "That's not what I meant at all. It just happens that I don't want that man killed, that's all. I'm rather fond of him!"

"You are an amazingly charitable woman, Cordelia." Preston bowed to her profoundly, and went quickly out of the summer house . . .

"There," she wrote afterwards. "If he had not been so splendidly dignified and unafraid, I could never have gotten through with it. If he had behaved any differently than he did from beginning to end I should have loathed him. It's an astonishing thing, perhaps, but I've never felt so absolutely devoted to him as I do right at this minute. Whatever he does, he does it with nobility. Well, I've tried my best to do my duty and to save him. Pray God I have succeeded."

4

Cordelia, one seems to feel, had no confidence in her prayer. In all the important moments of her life, the easy, fortunate outcome had not been hers; the road of her destiny

had toiled perpetually uphill through barren vistas; she had apparently been placed in the world to face constant defeats and accumulating griefs. It was not likely that any possible bitterness would be spared her.

"I'll get the stalk end every time," she wrote. "Of course some people would say that I prefer it. Of all the boys I knew in Charleston, I didn't have to go and pick Preston Baimbridge as the only man I would ever look at all the rest of my life. But I couldn't help that; I wanted him, and I could have had him. I may have been crying for the moon, but I got it. Preston finally wanted me. But a lot of good it's done either of us.

"Of course, if he hadn't been so fiendishly obstinate. There's no question about his having been born a New Englander! I've never know a man with such a capacity for self-punishment. He wouldn't allow his Heavenly Father Himself to forgive him his sins, I do believe. There are times when he simply isn't human—a perfect Galahad! Or else I'm absolutely vile! I know it, just as certainly as I'm sitting here, that he's going to force me

to choose between him and my country. He'll be Galahad to the end."

Perhaps he did not intend to. One knows so little, after all, about Preston. Except for a few glimpses of him in his own boyhood journal and in contemporary correspondence, and that one very keen appraisal of him by Royal Penmarch, one only sees him through Cordelia's eyes.

The sensitive, reticent, studious boy at Albermarle and Waccaboo, who was so fond of birds; the reserved, diffident, immaculate young beau with the blue waistcoat; the serious junior merchant shipper, the fiancé of Sally Penmarch who could say such charming, thoughtful things, who disposed of so many courteous, graceful, ingratiating ways, so winning, so modest, so finely fashioned; the jilted lover in the library at Penmarch, proud, exacting, harsh, and in the end fury smitten and savage. And then the grown man, austere, critical, prudent; consumed with honor, burdened with duty, clothed in meticulous restraint. But always fine, and genuine, and gallant.

These are some of the aspects in which one seems to see him; a man of severe ideals, of strict sensibilities, of high personal courage and distinction of mind, of extreme delicacy of spirit. But one knows so little else about him; one has had no means of witnessing the processes of his gradual change of heart towards Cordelia; the strain and weariness of the lonely years; the intensity of his conflicts with his conscience. One hardly knows what he did with himself during the days after Penmarch. If he was Galahad, it was not a smug, superlative, sanctimonious Galahad of facile victories—one feels confident of that—it was a strenuous, battling, grievously tried knight-at-arms, never sure of his strength, never certain of his endurance. His conscience was never as omnipotent as all that.

There is no saying what Preston might have concluded to do, in his crisis with Cordelia over the Federal agent, if the *Cordelia Belle* had not suddenly come scurrying into the port, running for neutral sanctuary out of the night, and demanding repairs and supplies.

5

It was early on the morning following Cordelia's last interview with Preston in the summer house. The *Cordelia Belle* came in just before daylight, and at breakfast a crowd of them were there at Ashley House, Steeny and some of the other officers. The dining room was grey with Confederate naval uniforms, resonant with talk concerning Valparaiso, and Singapore, Cape Town and Brest. Steeny would hardly believe it when he was told that Cordelia was there.

Whatever was she doing in Nassau, he asked her when she came downstairs in answer to his stentorian summons.

"A little bird told me you were arriving," she informed him, "and I came over to see you."

Steeny was not deceived by her evasions.

"You don't have to tell me," he smiled at her, "but I know you're not here sightseeing. You're up to something, and you're wearing yourself out. You look tired."

Cordelia did not explain to him that she had been up all of the night, pondering over her

problem with Preston, while she listened to the racket of drum beating and *Oh Kindoiah* Congo refrains of the fire dance at Delancy Town Settlement. Nor did she tell him that Preston was in Nassau; it was no subject to start between them at breakfast in that crowded room.

"Never mind me," she put Steeny off. "What are you doing here?"

Didn't he have sense enough to stay away from Nassau, when he must have known there was a Federal squadron in those waters? Couldn't he have gone into Havana for his supplies, instead of putting his head in the lion's mouth that way? The blockade runners were bad enough, but the Yankees would move Heaven and earth to capture the almost only remaining Confederate raider. What chance would he have of getting out against such odds?

"I tried to blockade them, oh dear, or dear,
With a fleet true and steady, oh dear . . ."

Steeny would only laugh at her, quoting from *Old Abe's Lament.* He had been obliged to

come in for repairs and provisions and a little surreptitious ammunition; he had slipped past the Federal cruisers during the night, without any of them seeing him; and in forty-eight hours' time he would slip out again the same way. And the United States Consul would not have an opportunity to send out any warnings, they had already seen to that. There wasn't a single boat left for hire in the entire harbor!

"It's not a question of the United States Consul," Cordelia explained to him. "You've landed in a hornet's nest here. There's a Federal agent in Nassau; he's been signalling information to the fleet. Unless I—unless we can prevent him," Cordelia remembered the slip afterwards, "the fact that the *Cordelia Belle* is here will very likely be known to the Yankees before the night is over."

"Sweet Timothy!" Steeny exclaimed. "How do you know all this?"

"As you just remarked, I'm not here sightseeing," was all that she would say. "Now don't ask me any questions."

Well but, hold on—Steeny wanted to know

a great many more things, naturally. Did Cordelia have this Federal agent spotted? They'd go with a file of marines and take him before he could lift a finger—he only did his signalling at night, presumably—and put him aboard the *Cordelia Belle;* and if anything happened to her they'd string him up at the gaff and "dip him in salute to the Federal fleet!"

"Don't be absurd," Cordelia reminded him. "This is neutral territory. If you try anything flagrant like that you'll find the West India Regiment on the wharf, and your ship interned, and yourself in a cell at Fort Charlotte. If you want to get out of here you'll abandon your supplies and sail tonight, and leave the rest to me."

"Abandon my supplies!" Steeny cried. "Not on your sweet life!"

"You'll do as I say, Captain Chantrell," Cordelia gave him her most official look. "You're talking to a special officer of the Confederate secret service, and I have authority over all Confederate acting masters and captains in this port."

Steeny took her in his arms, and fairly hugged the breath out of her.

"What a sailor you would have made, Cordelia!" he assured her, and she knew that he had paid her his greatest compliment. "But you can't be managing this all alone?"

"I'm not alone," she told him. "Don't you dare say a word to anyone about it, but Royal has been helping me right along. He's really doing all the work. He's a splendid boy."

Very well, she knew best, Steeny was reluctantly convinced; he would take the *Cordelia Belle* out that same night and fool the fleet. If Cordelia needed any help she must let him know.

"I sha'n't need any help for what I have to do," she insisted. "Just so long as you get safely out of here. You do your part and I'll do mine."

How surprised Steeny would be, Cordelia was thinking, if he could realize how hateful to her his presence in Nassau was on that particular morning! Glad as she was to see her brother, she could have wished him anywhere else in the world at the moment.

"I might have known something like this would happen," she wrote afterwards. "It's like that day at Penmarch. Just when I thought I had managed things with Preston, Steeny turned up and made everything impossible. And now when there was still a chance of persuading Preston, Steeny must turn up again to spoil everything. With the *Cordelia Belle* in port, I don't imagine Preston will ever agree to my terms. In a few hours I know I'm going to have to make a fearful decision, and God knows what I'm going to do —I don't!"

## CHAPTER III

### PISTOLS FOR ONE

### 1

PRESTON was to come that afternoon with the answer. Of course there was a possibility that he might not come at all, Cordelia had thought of that. If his answer was to be negative, if he was intending to pursue his task until the last available moment, he might not carry through the pretense of the interview with the Federal agent. Preston would feel secure against any formal complaint to the British authorities; he would also unquestionably be ready to risk private Confederate action against him until he had had an opportunity, at least, of warning the Federal fleet concerning the *Cordelia Belle*. A question of hours only.

"It wouldn't be a simple matter, after all,"

Cordelia admitted. "Before we could find a way of seizing him without attracting the attention of the authorities, the damage would be done. There are no boats left for hire, so that he can't sail out to Little Treasure Cay, if that's the place; but he can hide somewhere until dark, and then send his warning and have a boat come for him. If he's not here this afternoon I may not even have a chance to decide anything. I shall already have betrayed Steeny and the *Cordelia Belle*. I should have had Preston seized at once, if that's what I was going to do. Is it that I feel in my heart already that I can never betray Preston?"

For if he came—and she was sure, somehow, in spite of everything, that he would come; Preston would not deny her that courtesy, that interchange of fair dealing—and if his answer should be unsatisfactory, still Cordelia had taken no steps to have him seized even then! Whether she considered that, having invited this truce, so to speak, she was bound to let him come and go that one time more in safety, and not contrive a trap for him into which only his personal regard for her could have led him; or

whether, as she expressed it, she felt at the time in her own heart that she could never betray Preston—there is no indication anywhere in her journal that Cordelia made the slightest preparations to impede his departure that afternoon from Ashley.

She went to the library to wait for him, in a cold sweat of twofold apprehension. . . .

2

Cordelia's diary becomes a little chaotic at this point; her record of the next few hours is meagre and disjointed, evidently written under an overwhelming emotional strain which bereft her of consecutive thought; and it is here that one is fortunate to have at one's disposal the calm, observant notes made by Godfrey Loring.

For he came to Ashley that afternoon, looking for Captain Chantrell—who was very busy at the time embarking certain packing cases from the foot of the Queen's Staircase over at Fincastle—and found Cynthia sitting at the piano, humming away to herself. *The Homespun Dress,* he remembered.

"Oh yes, I am a southern girl,
And glory in the name,
And boast it with far greater pride
Than glittering wealth or fame.
We envy not the northern girl
Her robes of beauty rare,
Though diamonds grace her snowy neck,
And pearls bedeck her hair . . ."

"The Pearl of Nassau has no need of lesser pearls," he assured her gallantly. And where was everybody?

Cynthia didn't know. Captain Chantrell and the officers had been gone since breakfast. Miss Chantrell she believed was in the library. Royal had disappeared—he seemed very much occupied these days!

"Business first, of course. 'Man can't whistle and smoke one time!'" Godfrey Loring laughed, quoting one of the negro proverbs, and went on to the library.

Miss Chantrell was there, standing in the middle of the room, when he put his head inside the door. Was he intruding, or might he come in? No, he was welcome; Miss Chantrell

was expecting Mr. Morgan, he was finding out something for her.

"Oh, then I'll wait if I may," Godfrey Loring suggested. "I want to see him. He wasn't at the office this morning."

"Not at the office?" Miss Chantrell repeated his statement and stood staring at him rather vacantly, before turning aside to the open windows.

She was in an extremely nervous state, it appeared to him, restless and distrait; walking up and down, fidgeting with articles on the desk, stopping to look at him from time to time in his corner as though she had quite forgotten that he was there. But when on one occasion he started to excuse himself she insisted on his staying.

"No, don't go," she told him. "I may need somebody like you. I don't know—don't go, Mr. Loring."

"She was evidently greatly distressed about something," he wrote. "As I figured it she was glad to have someone there, anybody, to keep her company. What it could have to do with Richard Morgan I had not the vaguest idea.

But what a state that poor lady was in, my word!"

Once she moved impatiently away from the window.

"What is that everlasting droning noise?" she complained.

It was probably the negroes telling "ditties" around the kitchen door, he explained. They often did that in the afternoon. Hadn't Miss Chantrell heard them? Godfrey Loring was quite a student of Bahaman negro stories.

"B'Helephant an' B'Vwale?" he enquired. "B'Rabby an' B'Bouki? B'Hellibaby an' B'Dawndijane?" Awfully jolly yarns. They always began with a doggerel, *once it was a time, a very good time, de monkey chewed tobacco an' he spit white lime,* and when they were done they recited *E bo ban, my story end, if you don't believe my story true, hax my captain an' my crew.* They were well worth hearing. . . .

But she was not listening to a word he said. He might just as well have been talking to the man in the moon. It was soon after that

that she startled him with an unexpected question.

"Are you armed, Mr. Loring?" she wanted to know.

Good gracious no, he assured her. Sometimes at night, but never in the daytime. Was she in the habit of carrying a pistol?

"Yes, always," she admitted. "A small pistol. I've never had to use it."

"Fancy!" Godfrey Loring exclaimed. "Have you got it on you now?"

No, she didn't have it on her at the moment. No. It was in the drawer of the desk. Godfrey Loring felt relieved. He was beginning to get nervous himself in the presence of this strange, rather distracted lady. There was a knock at the door.

"Buckra Morgan, ma'am, he say he vwant to commune wid Missey, bless God!" Solomon's Porch was resonantly impressive in his major domo's livery.

"Show him in, please." Miss Chantrell's voice trembled eagerly over the words.

Richard Morgan was in the doorway.

3

He came quickly into the room, and stopped short when he saw Godfrey Loring.

"Good afternoon," he said to them both. "I came to deliver a message."

Hadn't he better retire and leave them to their business, Godfrey Loring suggested at once, but after a rather long look at Miss Chantrell, Richard Morgan shook his head.

"No," he remarked. "I can say what I have to say in front of Mr. Loring, if Miss Chantrell wishes. It's just an answer to a question."

"Will you excuse us a moment, Mr. Loring?" she asked him. "After Mr. Morgan has gone"—it seemed to Godfrey Loring that she purposely emphasized the words—"after Mr. Morgan has gone, I may have to explain the whole matter to you. That's why I wanted you to hear what he is going to say."

Godfrey Loring simply bowed. She was addressing him, he realized, but she was actually talking to Richard Morgan, trying to explain something to him. Godfrey Loring was certain of that.

"I gathered that it all depended on Richard Morgan's answer, or message, or whatever it was," he wrote afterwards. "She wanted him to understand that I didn't know beans about it yet, and that if she found that she had to tell me she wouldn't do it until he had gone. I thought it dashed funny at the time."

To one possessed of a more retrospective knowledge of the situation than was available at the moment to Godfrey Loring, the matter is perhaps not quite so "dashed funny." Cordelia was anxious to have Preston understand that he had nothing to fear from Godfrey Loring for the time being. If the circumstances required it, she might have to tell Godfrey Loring everything, and that was why he was there; but even then Preston was to have his free passage out of the room. She had not set any trap for him.

Now this was all very honorable and fair, of course, but one cannot pretend that one is impressed by the mere gallantry of the gesture. Cordelia was not a fool; very, very foolish sometimes, but not a fool. To let Preston go like that, if it was to be necessary to stop him—

if she had any intention of stopping him—was pure idiocy.

Once out of the room, and they might not find him again until after nightfall, supposing him to have refused her offer, and all the damage would presumably have been done. Cordelia must have understood that perfectly well. If she was going to act at all, she must act immediately, while Preston was still there. If she was proposing to do her duty, depending on his answer, her appointment with Preston at Ashley must inevitably be a trap for him. Cordelia could not extricate herself from that. Her gallant gesture was a delusion, her honorable impulse a latent treachery.

One can only conclude that Cordelia, at that late moment, had not yet decided what she was going to do should Preston's reply force her to a choice. She had put a pistol in the drawer of the desk—a pathetic compromise to begin with—she had kept Godfrey Loring in the room, she had gone so far as to threaten to confide in him, she had taken these belated steps to stop Preston, if it became necessary; but she had also promised him a safe departure,

whatever his answer, the precious moments of grace which must enable him to safeguard himself—and, with one exception at Penmarch, Cordelia had never lied maliciously in her life.

When she said that, she meant it, and in the same breath she must have known that under certain contingencies she could not possibly mean it. One stands quite helpless and dismayed before so complete a collapse of her composure, so distracted a tangle of indecision; one begins oneself to feel the cold perspiration of her fantastic dilemma . . .

Preston, Mr. Morgan rather, looked at her a second—she was standing near the open windows—and then he stepped quickly forward to the desk. Godfrey Loring's chair was between him and the closed door.

"I delivered your message, Miss Chantrell," he informed her, without any preliminaries. "The answer is No."

4

Godfrey Loring did not have to be told that something of the most arresting importance

had just been uttered. There was a whole lifetime of consequence in the little word. He himself was sitting on the edge of his chair, consumed with curiosity, breathless with a disagreeable anticipation. Whatever it might all be about, Richard Morgan's answer was the wrong answer. So much was distressingly clear.

He had not stirred; he was standing perfectly still, erect and self-contained, looking at the desk in front of him. And Miss Chantrell had not moved, except for an immediate, panic-stricken flutter of the hands up to her pale cheeks. So the three of them remained for quite an endlessly long time.

"It was like waiting for the thunder after an especially vicious flash of lightning," Godfrey Loring described it. "I've seen animals at bay with the same look she had in her eyes. I would have given anything not to have been there."

But words finally came to her. She left the window and went to the other side of the desk, facing Richard Morgan.

"Don't say that," she begged him. "It can't

be No. It puts us all in such a frightful situation."

"The situation has been frightful from the beginning," he replied. "I don't think the answer could ever have been different, but the arrival of the *Cordelia Belle* settled that. No compromise was possible after that."

The mention of the *Cordelia Belle* aroused Godfrey Loring's uttermost attention. Then this was not a private matter, Captain Chantrell's ship was involved, the question was one of public significance.

"But if the *Cordelia Belle* had not arrived," Miss Chantrell was insisting, "and the answer had been Yes, and supposing the ship had come in after that"—did he understand—"what would have happened then? The compromise would have been possible then! The man would have given his word."

"He would unquestionably have cancelled it under those circumstances," Richard Morgan advised her. "He wants you to understand that his decision has nothing whatever to do with your brother. There's nothing personal involved. He wants you to know that."

"Then what is it, what is it that makes him so obstinate?" she assailed him—a little unjustly one must admit. Cordelia had no right to pretend ignorance of Preston's attitude, or to attempt to connect it with any personal spite against Steeny.

"I don't think you ought to ask such a question," he seemed to be reproving her. "This man has a duty to perform. You should be the last person to forget that. Whatever you may think of him, you ought not to disparage his motive. He has had to make the most heart-rending decision of his whole life—he doesn't think you will deny that—and he has chosen to be loyal to his duty. You can call it obstinate if you like."

Duty, the *Cordelia Belle,* all this talk—Godfrey Loring was beginning to see daylight. He thought that he understood. And one other thing. This "man" they were talking of so glibly, this anonymous third person Miss Chantrell was so concerned about, was there in the room with them. It was Richard Morgan himself. The dreadful certainty of it took possession of Godfrey Loring's astounded mind.

"Oh, he's hard!" she exclaimed, in a pitiful voice. "He's hard. He's not charitable, he's not kind, he's not human. Tell him he's breaking my heart!"

5

Richard Morgan made a little helpless gesture with his hands.

"I'm sorry, Cordelia," he remarked—and Godfrey Loring was quick to notice the slip. They knew each other intimately then, all along. "I don't see what difference it can make."

"You don't!" There was a note of anger now in her voice.

"No, I don't," he maintained. "Duty is duty, and honor is honor, and if hearts must be broken there is no help for it. If he's breaking your heart, do you suppose his own has escaped?"

"Has he any heart at all?" she defied him. "What does he expect me to do?"

"He expects you to do your own duty," he replied. "He has never expected you to do anything else. It's for him to defend himself

against anything you attempt, at any time and in any place. Perhaps you've never quite understood him. If you were to fail in your duty out of personal consideration for him, he would be terribly ashamed. You would no longer be the woman of courage and integrity he has always known. That you should be less conscientious than he—I think that would break his heart more than anything else that could happen to him."

By gad, the man had a magnificent honesty, a superb candor, an incredible simplicity of soul, Godfrey Loring was thinking—and then he found himself listening to extraordinary words which Miss Chantrell was flinging at Richard Morgan, just as magnificent, superb and incredible words, uttered with complete disregard of his own insignificant presence.

"Oh, you're abominable!" she cried. "My duty, my courage, my integrity! I won't have you making a saint out of me. I won't have you preaching to me after all the unworthy things you've made me do in my life."

Unworthy things—what did she mean?

"You talk about my failing in my duty," she

laughed. "My stars! I've done worse things than that for you. I've swallowed my pride, I've allowed you to humiliate me time and time again, I've come near betraying my brother. Integrity! Why, I've lied myself black in the face because of you!"

"Lied? Because of me?" Richard Morgan was incredulous.

"Yes," she told him. "At Penmarch, on the day of the wedding. You thought it was Steeny who had persuaded Sally, and you tried to kill him for it. But it wasn't Steeny; it was I. It was something I said to her about you just before she went to the chancel that decided her. I made her promise not to tell."

"I don't want to know!" he tried to interrupt her, but she was determined that he should hear.

"I can't help it," she insisted. "I want you to know just what kind of person I can be when my heart is breaking! I was bound to stop that wedding, and I told her that you were only marrying her from ambition, that you were not in love with her at all, that you were only thinking of Penmarch and the social position that

went with it. I said that you had told me so."

So there it is, the explanation of that incident which Lucinda Prentice had noted long ago. It was all Greek to Godfrey Loring, but he recorded it carefully, along with the rest of this conversation which had him gasping.

Richard Morgan drew back a step.

"What a perfectly despicable thing to do!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to tell me you lied like that to Sally about me? That you went behind my back and deliberately told her a shameful falsehood like that which she's believed about me ever since? That's a miserable trick, Cordelia! How could you possibly do a thing like that? You—you cover me with shame. You ought to have bitten off your tongue before you said such a thing."

"On the contrary, I had to do it, or lose you. That's the difference between us, I reckon. Now I suppose you despise me?" she challenged him. "I'm no longer the woman of courage and integrity you thought you knew?"

"I don't say that at all," he answered. "I'm sorry I spoke as I did just now, but you—you

astonished me, Cordelia! No, we both seem to have done things at Penmarch to be sorry for. God knows it's not for me to criticize you. You'd never do a thing like that again."

"And if I did?"

"If you did?" he repeated. "But you wouldn't, that's all. You wouldn't. How could you?"

She simply stood and stared at him, slowly shaking her head. . . .

6

"It's no use"—Godfrey Loring saw that she was really talking to herself, thinking aloud—"I can't ever make him understand. He'll only go on upbraiding me to the end of his life with his own integrity. I thought because I loved him I could conquer every obstacle in the world, but I can't conquer him. He's too strong. I can destroy him, but I can't conquer him."

"What are you saying, Cordelia?" he enquired.

She looked at him a long while before replying, gazing into his eyes.

"Listen to me," she said finally. "This is the last time we'll ever speak together on this earth. You are a strong, hard man, Preston Baimbridge"—Godfrey Loring was past being surprised at anything—"you are merciless to yourself and to others. For some reason I have always adored you. I shall never cease doing so."

"My dear," he murmured.

"I don't know if we should ever have been happy together," she went on. "I really don't know. You have a way of causing me to do things I hate myself for and then putting me to shame for having done them. Well, it won't happen again. This time I'm going to do something that seems to me hateful, because you think it's right and because I won't have you despising me."

Godfrey Loring realized that something desperate was in the air. Richard Morgan—Preston Baimbridge, whatever the extraordinary man's name was—seemed to realize it too. He moved uneasily, and glanced around him once, but he could not keep his eyes off Miss Chantrell.

"What do you mean, Cordelia?" he asked her.

"You'll never get out of this room," she explained to him suddenly. "No, don't move, what's the use? You're a spy and Mr. Loring must be aware of it by now. He's standing right behind you"—Heavens yes, Godfrey Loring was on his feet, ready to jump out of his skin—"and if you lift a finger he'll be on top of you. There, I've lied to you, and I've betrayed you. I've put you in a trap. I wasn't going to, I'd have given you your chance. But I must do my duty."

"You know that I don't blame you," was all that he said. "I shouldn't have stayed here talking to you."

"Understand me," she appealed to him. "When I say I must do my duty, it's not just because you're a spy. I should never have betrayed you this way just because of that. It's because you're too strong, you're too invincible. I care for you too much to have you scorn me. I can't conquer you, and so I must destroy you. I can only keep you by losing you. My dear!"

The terrible Cordelia. . . .

"Tell me what to do," he replied immediately, without any bravado.

She never faltered at all. Godfrey Loring was utterly unmanned; Richard Morgan could have pushed him over with one finger; for "a couple of little coppers" he would have shoved him out of the room, and "be damned to everything." But that Miss Chantrell simply stood there "like a sword."

"Look in the top drawer of the desk," she told this man that she loved. "I prevented you from doing it once at Penmarch. Now the time has come."

Then only did her terrific self-control desert her. She flew to the window and buried her head in the curtains—her face, her eyes, her ears, and her two shuddering hands—and Godfrey Loring recovered his voice.

"I say!" he remembered blurting out. "This is horrible!"

And then he found himself choking and coughing. Richard Morgan had not hesitated a second. Pistol in hand, he might easily have made his escape, but it never seemed to occur to him. He may have assumed that Godfrey

Loring was armed. Or he may have welcomed this solution, this release from invincibility.

"I should have done it long ago," he remarked, and fired. . . .

People came almost at once, of course. Solomon's Porch, the maids, Cynthia—the room was full of outcries. They discovered Godfrey Loring kneeling beside a dead man on the floor, and Cordelia standing above him, staring with tortured eyes.

"There's been an accident," she kept repeating, and Godfrey Loring understood that he must not correct her. "There's been an accident. Mr. Morgan has shot himself. I want to see Royal as soon as he comes. . . ."

In the midst of it all, for the second time in her life, Cordelia fainted.

## 7

That was in August, 1864.

Cordelia Chantrell had still fourteen years to live. Years of strenuous hardship and misfortune; the last tragic hours in Charleston, the final defeat of the Confederacy, the long dreariness and humiliation of Reconstruction.

The days of the Black Cavalry and the Knights of the White Camelia, of the Loyal League and the Freedmen's Bureau, and of the South Carolina Rifle Clubs. Cordelia witnessed those scenes, she took sides in those enterprises, she was always active and steadfast—but one leaves any discussion of them definitely, somehow, to the historian.

Cordelia herself had perished on that afternoon in the library at Ashley House; her journal is thenceforth bleak and lifeless. She hardly took pains to record the aftermaths of that day's work—her interview with Royal in which she made him promise never to tell what he knew about Mr. Morgan; the safe passage out of Nassau of the *Cordelia Belle,* set free to conclude her fortunate career, never captured and never abandoned until the end of the war, with Steeny laughing on his quarterdeck at the discomfiture of the Federal agent whose identity he never learned; Cordelia's own parting with Godfrey Loring.

"Do you absolutely detest me?" she asked him.

"I don't think I shall ever be able to make up

my mind," he told her frankly. "In all my life I have never known a more dreadful business. But that's not the point. Richard Morgan was satisfied. I'm positive of that. And for you, that's the only thing that need matter."

Cordelia went home; she toiled through the following years; at the end, driven from Charleston by her own dread of the place, of its associations and of its memories—and Charles Baimbridge was still there—she was living in New York; in a boarding house on West Twenty-third Street, with Suzanne Chantrell until her death, and for nearly a year after that alone. In considerably straitened circumstances—the Chantrell fortunes had suffered notably during the war—but above all in a monotony of desolation such as can seldom have fallen to the lot of any human being. The burden, to begin with, of such a secret carried for fourteen unmerciful years.

And to compensate her, only the assurance that at the end she had preserved Preston's esteem, and expiated the pistol shot at Penmarch which her betrayal of Preston had made possible by the one at Ashley which his faith in

her had rendered inevitable. And those fortifying words of Godfrey Loring's.

"Richard Morgan was satisfied. I'm positive of that. And for you, that's the only thing that need matter." Cordelia often remembered the words, and the grave, dispassionate tone of Godfrey Loring's voice, and the honest, encouraging look that he had given her.

And on the night of September 3, 1878, she died, of heart failure so they decided. With a box of matches in her hand, in front of the hidden closet containing the notebooks of the Chantrell Diary, the record of her uncommon years, which it had evidently been her ultimate intention to destroy.

The strange Cordelia. . . .

THE END

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